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Nick Carter Stories

BEHIND PRISON BARS
or Nick Carter's Warm Reception

NICK CARTER STORIES

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BEHIND PRISON BARS;

Or, NICK CARTER'S WARM RECEPTION.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER

CHAPTER I.

A HUNCH.

Three or four months before, within a space of a couple of weeks, Nick Carter and his assistants had been instrumental in the capture of several men, two of whom were wanted in direct connection with two great radium robberies, the others having been employed by them in one way or another.

Two hundred and forty thousand dollars' worth of radium, representing two grams of the most precious substance in the world, had been stolen from the New York offices of the big Lambert Radium Reduction Company, and the next night three similar little platinum tubes, each holding a gram worth one hundred and twenty thousand dollars, had been taken from a safe in the company's plant at Paradise, Colorado.

Thus, no less than six hundred thousand dollars' worth of the miracle-working mineral had been spirited away within twenty-four hours.

Nick Carter, together with his two leading assistants, Chick and Patsy, had handled the case both in New York and in Colorado. Their efforts had been speedily crowned with success so far as the capture of those immediately involved were concerned, but, in spite of all the pressure brought to bear thus far, the whereabouts of the vanished radium still remained unknown.

Some four months after the arrest of the young man who called himself variously Black, Leffingwell, and Steinmetz, and who had handled the Colorado end of the radium robberies, Chick Carter strode into his chief's study on Madison Avenue. Even before he spoke, it was evident that he believed that he had something on his mind of more than ordinary importance to communicate.

"I am wondering if that nigger isn't sticking his woolly pate out from under the woodpile at last, chief," he announced.

Nick looked up with a slight smile and a question in his eyes.

"What gentleman of color is that, Chick?" he inquired; "and which woodpile?"

"I mean the radium case," was the answer.

Nick's careless glance became keener.

"Ah!" he said. "And I wonder if by any chance you are referring specifically to the People's Radium Institute that has recently been opened on Seventy-fifth Street?"

"That's the place!" Chick replied.

"But I understood that the County Medical Association, which has been investigating the institute, had found nothout out of the way about it, and was on the point of giving it a clean bill of health," objected Nick.

"That's just what they have done," returned his assistant. "A brief summary of their report appears in the last edition of the *Star*."

"Well, then, how are you going behind that?" was Nick's next question. "You know as well as I do that there was considerable suspicion aroused when this People's Radium Institute first opened three weeks or a month ago. It interested us because we had taken great pains to find out that the five grams of stolen radium—which constitute a very considerable portion of the total existing supply of pure radium in the world—had not been offered for sale in any of the known radium markets. We had been forced to conclude from that that the precious stuff had either not been stolen with the idea of selling it outright, or else it had passed out of the hands of those who originally took it, and was being hoarded with some other object in view. That being so, I had been more or less prepared to see some such institution as this new radium institute spring up, conducted under questionable auspices,

and designed to take advantage of the great present demand for radium treatment as an alleged cure for cancer."

Chick nodded.

"That was one of the possibilities, of course," he agreed; "and when we discovered, after some pretty thorough searching inquiries, that the man who was behind the People's Radium Institute did not have an altogether enviable record, we naturally thought that we were getting warm, as the children say. We identified the institute's backer, Henry L. Schwartz, as an ex-patent-medicine manufacturer of rather unsavory reputation, who had made and spent two or three fortunes by playing on the incredulity of the sick and ignorant, and who had finally been driven out of business by the pure-food law. That looked interesting, but when we found that the County Medical Association was suspicious for another reason, you wisely stood back and let them conduct the preliminary investigation. Their first idea seems to have been, as I understand it, that the institute was a fake, and that no radium at all was being used in its treatments."

"Exactly," Nick put in, "but they have changed their minds, have they, according to the report?"

"They've executed nothing less than a right-about face!" declared Chick. "I took occasion to call up the chairman of the association's investigating committee in order to get verification of the newspaper report, for I knew you'd want it. Doctor Bryson tells me that the *Star* correctly reported the findings of the committee, and that they mean, in justice to the institute, to give the result as wide publicity as possible. They have satisfied themselves that the institute is in possession of a supply of genuine radium—one gram, it claims—and that the treatments given are above criticism in every way. In fact, Doctor Bryson was quite enthusiastic and confidential in regard to the way in which the institute is being managed by Doctor Kimball, who is in active charge there."

Nick Carter thought he knew what had been in Chick's mind when his assistant had made his original remark on entering the room, and he was inclined to agree with the point of view suggested, but he had been seeking to draw Chick out. He continued to do so without expressing his own opinion for the present.

"Well," he said innocently, "we may be sure that the association's committee knows what it's talking about, and after the doctors' original hostility, they certainly wouldn't give the institute a case of whitewash unless circumstances forced them to do so. That lets Schwartz and his new enterprise out, doesn't it, and leaves us without a leg to stand on?"

Chick made an impatient gesture.

"Oh, come, chief!" he expostulated. "You know perfectly well what I'm driving at, so what's the use of pretending to be so dense. We were suspicious of the institute because of Schwartz's previous reputation, and also because we believed it was using genuine radium. The County Medical Association, on the other hand, thought it smelled a rat because of Schwartz, in the first place, and secondly because it doubted that the institute had any radium. They found that they were wrong on the latter count, which means that we were right about it. Their investigation has proved that the institute has a quantity of pure radium. Doesn't it begin to look as if we ought to go into the matter a little deeper than we have done? Wouldn't you like to know how much radium the institute possesses, whether it is merely the gram they claim, or much more—say five grams? And wouldn't it be interesting to know where Schwartz got it?"

The corners of Nick's mouth twitched a little, but the smile was mostly in his eyes.

"Surely it would satisfy one's curiosity to know about those little details," he replied; "but why not take the institute's own word for it? If I remember rightly, the management announced, when the place was opened, that their supply of radium was obtained from their own claims situated near Bitter River, Utah. Bitter River is certainly in what is now recognized as the radium belt. It is located close to the eastern line of Utah, and not very far across the border from Paradise Valley itself, where most of the country's radium production is centered. Isn't that good enough for you?"

"I'm jig-sawed if it is!" declared Chick. "At any rate, not when the man behind the announcement is a yellow dog like Henry L. Schwartz. It would take a good deal to convince me that that man could conduct a business that was straight in every detail, even if he wanted to, and he's certainly never shown any leanings in that direction in the past. If the institute itself is all open and aboveboard, as it seems to be, then I'd like to bet it's at least tainted at the source—in other words, that its radium never saw Bitter River, Utah."

"Prejudice isn't proof," Nick reminded him.

"Maybe not," admitted Chick, "but a hunch often precedes proof, and leads to it."

"So you have a hunch?" queried the detective. "You think that Schwartz's radium belongs to the Lambert people?"

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised, to say the least."

"Have you forgotten that when the People's Institute first opened its doors, I took occasion to send some telegraphic inquiries to Bitter River, and that I was informed by several responsible persons in the town that the People's Radium Extraction Company owned some bona-fide radium land near there, and had a plant in operation for nearly three months?"

"No, I hadn't forgotten it," his assistant rejoined, "but it doesn't satisfy me, and I'm darned sure it doesn't satisfy you, either. Does it, now? Quit kidding me along, chief, and put yourself on record. It won't incriminate you, you know."

Nick's smile was unmistakable this time.

"Won't it?" he asked. "Even so, I don't think I shall commit myself, just yet. I should like to hear your reasons for going behind the returns—if you have any reasons."

"All right. Have it your own way," grumbled Chick. "Maybe I might give you some pretty good imitations of a reason if I tried."

"Trot them out; that's what I want!"

CHAPTER II.

SEEKING CLEWS.

"Well, how's this, for instance?" Chick wanted to know: "Radium extraction, from all I can find out, is about the lengthiest process known. You dig out your pitch blende, or your carnotite, or whatever radium-bearing ore you may discover, and you cart it by the ton to your reduction works. There you put it through an almost end-

less number of different processes, most of them secret. The reduction means an enormous expense, and requires weeks and months of time, and, when you get through with it, if you are lucky, you won't have any more than enough pure radium to make a comfortable load for a flea. Isn't that about right?"

"That's practically the size of it," Nick admitted.

"All right. Now, for the sake of argument, we'll assume that this People's Radium Institute here has only the amount of radium it claims to have—one gram. One gram means a thousand milligrams, one milligram being the ordinary standard for weighing radium. There are not very many grams of the stuff in the world, as a matter of fact, in spite of the fact that extraction has gone on for years. Therefore one gram of radium is a comparatively large amount, and must represent a great many tons of ore, and have cost a lot of money and time to extract it. Here is my first question in a nutshell: Could a gram of radium have been obtained by one company from one plant in the space of only three months? Can there be any more than one answer to that?"

Nick Carter was serious enough now.

"I don't see how there could be, Chick," he replied. "It looks as if such a feat of production is an impossibility, with the methods now in vogue, at any rate."

"Then the thing looks queer the moment we scratch a little way below the surface, doesn't it?"

"So I have thought all along," Nick confessed. "I have been waiting, however, for the County Medical Association to conclude its investigation. If it had found that the institute was an ordinary swindle, falsely claiming to give genuine radium treatments for cancer, there would obviously have been no use in our doing anything about it. We are looking for real radium, and an enormous quantity of it, comparatively speaking, rather than for fake radium, or no radium at all. As it has turned out, however, it certainly looks as if it would be worth while for us to go a little farther into this matter. Any other imitation' reasons you can produce?"

"That's what I've been losing the most sleep over," Chick answered. "The other thing that has been bothering me is of much less importance, but may be worth mentioning. When you telegraphed out to Bitter River and got those answers, you found out, among other things, didn't you, that the People's Radium Reduction Company meant Henry L. Schwartz—that he was practically the whole company?"

"That's true."

"Then, if that is so, Schwartz must have laid out a good big sum in the last few months, if he has really been producing radium in a legitimate way. On the other hand, I have been making some quiet inquiries myself, and everybody I can find who knows anything about Schwartz's private affairs insists that his funds have been very low for the past year or so. From all accounts he has had pretty hard sledding. Now, it may be possible that he has borrowed money to put into this land and plant at Bitter River, but his credit has been very much impaired for some years, and it doesn't seem likely that he could have secured a sum sufficient for the production of radium on any such large scale."

"And you deduce from that?"

"Well, as I said in the beginning, this suspicion isn't worth much, and it may be baseless. It strikes me, though, that the common reports of the German's financial condition does not seem to agree very well with what he is supposed to have done in this radium matter. You can't take a shoe string and buy a tract of radium land, build and equip a plant, pay for all the special machinery necessary, and then right on top of that equip an expensive radium institute in the heart of New York City? That sort of thing can't be done without money, and lots of it.

"If Schwartz had really been a producer of radium, and there was any evidence to show that he had sold some of his product in order to finance the rest of his undertaking, that would be a different matter. We know, however, that no radium has come on the market from any such source, and that means until the institute was opened, it had all been going out and nothing coming in. A man who makes large outlays without apparently having capital or credit to justify them, is always a more or less legitimate object of suspicion, isn't he?"

"Generally speaking, yes," Nick answered. "As you say, there is plenty of room for some other explanation in regard to this money matter, but when taken in connection with all the rest, it seems to furnish an additional reason for auditing Schwartz's books, so to speak. I am glad to see, Chick, that you have gone so far into this business. Something has been nudging me in the side for some time. Now, I believe that the moment has come to probe this thing to the very bottom. Nothing may come of it, but at any rate, it looks more promising than anything else that has come to our attention; and poor Lambert will feel much better if he sees us with our coats off, and actively hunting once more for his long-lost half a million and more of radium."

"That's the way I feel about it, too," Chick said eagerly. "How are you going about it?"

"I think I shall pay a visit to the institute first in disguise, and gather some impressions of my own in regard to the place and the way in which it is managed. If I can get into touch with Schwartz, so much the better. That is doubtful, however, for I suspect he is keeping in the background as much as possible, and hasn't welcomed the revelation that he is the one who is behind the institute. That probably hasn't improved business, and I suspect that he would have avoided it if possible. Therefore, I am not counting on running across him there, but if I don't, I think I shall keep on until I do, even if it takes me West again. I should like to have a look at that Bitter River plant, before we go into the matter very far."

Nick Carter lost no time in putting his plan into execution. In the character of a physician from Maine—a part which came easily to him owing to his very considerable knowledge of medical matters—he called at the People's Radium Institute a few hours later. He expressed a desire to be shown over the institution, because of his great interest in the use of radium for cancer, and because he had a well-to-do patient whom he might advise to take treatment there if he found the institute all it claimed to be.

Naturally he was received with open arms. The young physician in charge, Doctor Francis Kimball, took him personally in hand, showed him every possible courtesy, and gave him a thoroughly satisfying insight into the methods employed.

Nick was favorably impressed by Kimball, from the beginning. He found him an unusually clean-cut, intelligent young man, thoroughly conversant with the use of radium as a remedial agent, enthusiastic over the progress shown by his patients up to date, and genuinely proud of the institute's complete equipment.

The precious little store of radium was shown to the detective. The methods employed were frankly described to him, and he was allowed to talk freely with the patients. The only things that seemed to justify criticism about the place were the character of the man who had founded it, and the fact that its widely published claims in regard to free treatment of the poor were hardly borne out by the conditions actually found. The latter, however, did not necessarily imply willful misrepresentation. It might only mean that those interested in the institute had been overenthusiastic, and had not realized just what their rosy promises would involve, when it came to an attempt to put them into practice.

Doctor Kimball seemed to be perfectly sincere in his expressions of regret that they had not been able to do what they hoped to do in that direction. He pointed out, however, that if they had given even one-tenth of the free treatments requested, their resources would have been taxed to the utmost, and there would have been no possibility of treating those who could pay adequately for it. That was plainly out of the question, he declared, except in the case of a heavily endowed institution of a charitable sort; whereas the People's Radium Institute was a private enterprise that was obliged to pay expenses, at least, in order to keep open.

There was so much common sense in that contention, and Kimball seemed so frank in every way, that Nick was obliged to conclude that, if there were anything wrong at all, the man before him was not in the secret.

It was natural, under the circumstances, that the disguised detective should express a desire to meet the founder of the institute. He was informed, however, that Schwartz very seldom visited the place, and that he was then in Utah looking after his interests at Bitter River.

Having learned all that he was likely to there, Nick heartily congratulated Doctor Kimball on his management of the place and took his departure, determined to go out to Utah at once, and see what he could learn at firsthand in regard to the plant there.

CHAPTER III.

A SIGNIFICANT LIKENESS.

Chick went with Nick to Utah, the start being made the next day.

They had decided to pass themselves off as representatives of certain financial interests in the East, who had come to Utah to look over the ground, in the hope that promising radium-bearing ore could be discovered, and a new claim staked out. That would give them an excuse for making what inquiries they pleased about the radium situation in Bitter River, and, in order to be as thorough about it as possible, they left New York in the disguise which they intended to wear in the West.

They found Bitter River to be a small settlement on the Rio Grande, not far from the Colorado line, and in the midst of a country that was very similar to that about Paradise Valley, Colorado, which had been the scene of Nick's latest experiences with the radium robbers.

The population was not more than eight thousand, and the village was still in a decidedly raw state, but it was booming; and the detectives soon discovered that the former patent-medicine manufacturer had recently become quite a local hero. They had been more or less prepared for that, as a result of the favorable reports they had previously received from Bitter River, but the extent of the German's popularity surprised them, nevertheless. Everybody they met seemed to believe in him implicitly, and have a good word to say for him.

Apparently, he was looked upon as one of the pillars of the community, and as a man who was sure to put Bitter River "on the map," and bring a large measure of prosperity to it. The more they heard the less seemed to be the chance that the People's Radium Extraction Company was a bogus affair. If it was, Schwartz had certainly hypnotized the townspeople to an almost unparalleled extent.

In their assumed characters, it was a simple matter for Nick and Chick to learn that Schwartz did, indeed, own a genuine radium claim a few miles from the village, and that he had been working it for some months. The plant was also an actuality. They saw it with their own eyes, outwardly at least, before they had been in the place an hour.

It was a roughly built structure, of some little size, and which, they were informed, had originally been erected as a stamp mill during the mining craze that had swept over Bitter River a few years before. The promise of gold in commercial quantities had soon been proved to be groundless, and the company that had erected the mill had failed. It had remained idle and unoccupied until Schwartz had come along, bought it for a nominal sum, and transferred it, ostensibly, at any rate, into a radium-reduction plant.

There could be no doubt that carnotite was being transported in considerable bulk from Schwartz's radium lands to his reduction works, mule teams being used for the purpose. About fifteen men were employed at the plant under Jim Gaston, the superintendent, who was a young mining engineer.

Inquiries soon brought out the fact that Gaston and his men were not very popular in the place, and that Gaston and almost all of his men were strangers, who had been brought into Bitter River by Schwartz.

Curiously enough, however, the citizens did not seem to lay that up against the German. They might have been expected to resent the fact that most of the money paid for labor went to those who could not properly be called fellow townsmen, but they did not. Schwartz was praised for having added to the population of the place, even to that limited extent, and it was confidently predicted that his enterprise would grow, and bring more money into the town, and that its presence there would advertise Bitter River throughout the country as nothing else could do.

No outsider, it seemed, had ever been allowed to visit the plant, but the Bitter Riverites did not see anything suspicious about that, for Schwartz had evidently impressed upon them the undoubted fact that the reduction of radium is a generously guarded secret process, or series of processes. That was true enough, so far as it went, and gave abundant excuse for the uncommunicativeness of the men employed, but it was easy to see that if

Schwartz was an impostor, that was just the sort of thing he would insist upon.

Nick and his assistant did not mean to jump at conclusions, however. If Schwartz's enterprise were really not what it seemed, he had unquestionably covered his tracks in an unusual way, and it was necessary for them to go slow.

Partly in order not to arouse the man's suspicions, but principally because he wished to study him at close range, Nick sought an interview with Schwartz. He found Schwartz to be big-framed and powerful, of a darker complexion than is usually associated with Germans, and with a pair of rather shifty eyes, that were set too close together. He wore his hair in a pompadour, and his heavy, dark mustache, streaked with gray, was carefully waxed, and worn with the points turned up, which gave him a military appearance.

Indeed, Nick felt as if he had seen the man many times before, for, during the years of Schwartz's success, one could hardly pick up a newspaper without finding the man's picture staring at him from a patent-medicine advertisement of "Schwartz's Sure Cure," or some other quack remedy.

He had a pompous, domineering, self-important air, and had evidently not quite mastered the English language, in spite of all his years of residence in the country. He could be very polite and oily when he wished, and he chose to be so with the disguised detective, but, for all that, Nick concluded that he had a violent temper, and would be a dangerous man to handle in a pinch.

The interview was an unimportant one on the surface, for Nick kept strictly within the bounds of his assumed character, and was careful to act as if he accepted Schwartz's information without the slightest question.

The detective inquired about the extent of the radium lands in the reaches about Bitter River, complimented Schwartz on having the foresight and good luck to secure his claim in time, and asked the German's advice in regard to chances for investigation along that line in the neighborhood. Schwartz was very pleasant, and seemingly very frank, but any impression that could otherwise have been created was spoiled by those furtive, calculating eyes of his, and his too effusive manner.

Nick had not expected to get anything out of the man, and consequently his failure in that respect did not disappoint him. The interview did bring out one surprising thing, however: It gave him what looked like a possible clew to something which had long been puzzling him.

His failure to recover the stolen radium, in spite of the fact that he had rounded up everybody he could find who seemed to be even remotely connected with the thefts, had been more than ordinarily galling to the great detective. Nick was by no means accustomed to failure; even to temporary failure.

That being so, he had spent a good many hours in going over the problem, and in returning again and again to every detail connected with the chase and capture of the men concerned.

"Jumpy" Riley had done the New York job, and had been captured within twenty-four hours, but no trace of the stolen radium was found. The Bowery gangster had been forced into a partial confession, which had implicated a man whom he called Black, who, he claimed, had hired him to steal the radium from the company's Eastern office in accordance with a plan already worked out in detail.

Riley's description of this man had subsequently been found to fit the young man who had stolen the second and larger lot of radium from the Lambert Company's plant in Paradise, Colorado. There had been plenty of reason, therefore, for Nick Carter and his assistants to take it for granted that in this second arrest they had succeeded in putting behind the bars the man who was chiefly responsible for the two huge robberies—in short, the man higher up.

That impression had seemed to be confirmed when it was found that the safe breaker in New York, had, before his arrest, shipped the radium he had stolen to Denver, where it was claimed by Black, alias Leffingwell, alias Adolph Steinmetz.

There, however, the trail had ended, so far as the vanished radium was concerned. All the men they could connect with the affair, directly or indirectly, were in custody either in New York or Colorado, but the detectives seemed no nearer the recovery of the radium than they had been when the president of the Lambert Company had first sought their aid.

Months had passed without any further developments. The prisoners had been grilled repeatedly without result, and then returned to their cells to await their postponed trials. At length, the People's Radium Institute had been opened in New York, and, as we have seen, Nick and Chick had begun to have their suspicions regarding it. Heretofore, however, they had been working entirely in the dark, without having found any means of connecting Henry L. Schwartz with the men they had already captured.

But now at last Nick thought he saw a new light. Schwartz's face, seen at close range, had reminded him of another. For some time he had cudgeled his brain in an effort to recall the connection. As he left the room after his interview with the German, however, the missing link flashed into view.

Henry L. Schwartz bore a marked resemblance to the young man who had committed the second robbery—the man who had been arrested in Denver under the name of Steinmetz.

Instantly a suspicion of the truth popped into Nick's mind. He knew that Schwartz had a son who was supposed to be in business in the West. The man who had led him such a chase in Colorado was probably that son, unless the detective's intuitions had gone astray.

"By the Lord Harry!" Nick thought, as he gained the dusty street. "If I am right about that, we certainly have Schwartz where we want him, provided we can prove his enterprise here to be nothing but a blind. No wonder we couldn't find the stolen radium. The son must have passed it on to his father before Patsy and I ever put in an appearance in Denver. He didn't send it out of the city in any ordinary way, as I took pains to find out, but he may have had a personal messenger who took charge of it. That would explain why I could get no trace of it through the post office or the express companies. And, by George, here's another link in the chain! Jumpy Riley claimed that the man who hired him gave the name of Black, and Black is practically the English equivalent for Schwartz. If that isn't Joe Schwartz who's been locked up all this time in the Denver jail, then I've lost my cunning!"

CHAPTER IV.

A MAKE-BELIEVE PLANT.

Elated by his success, in thus bridging the gap between the ex-patent-medicine manufacturer and the young man who had been chiefly instrumental in the two huge radium robberies, Nick Carter returned to the one and only hotel which Bitter River possessed, and which Nick and his assistant necessarily shared with Schwartz as fellow guests.

He found Chick there, and quickly informed him of his latest suspicions. Chick was even more excited than Nick at the prospect of bringing the German up short at an early date, and it turned out that he, too, had something to add to the case against the People's Radium Extraction Company.

According to the account of Nick's assistant, a couple of government agents had appeared in town since Nick had left the hotel. They had been sent out from Washington to look over the radium situation in Colorado and Utah, with a view to making recommendations in regard to the desirability of Uncle Sam's taking over all possible radium-bearing lands which had not thus far been claimed or operated by private parties.

They had done some prospecting in the neighborhood, before reaching the little settlement, and among other places, they had visited Schwartz's claim. Not only that, but they had told Chick in confidence that the acreage controlled by the German was entirely inadequate to warrant a plant of the size of that maintained by Schwartz in Bitter River, and that it was absurd to suppose that the little claim could have yielded anything like a gram of radium in three or four months.

Nick was naturally glad of this authoritative information. It furnished one more count in the rapidly lengthening indictment against Henry L. Schwartz, and now it seemed that the only thing remaining to be done was to pay a secret visit to the supposed reduction works at the earliest opportunity, and secure evidence, at firsthand, of the condition which they were morally certain existed there—namely, that the plant had not really been worked at all under Schwartz's ownership.

The fact of their presence in town, and that of the two government agents, might easily make Schwartz timid, and result in extra precautions being taken to guard the company's building. On the other hand, the German might smell a rat and take a notion to absent himself from Bitter River for a time.

The chase had been a long enough one, already, taking into account all the time that had passed since the first radium robbery had been committed in New York. Consequently, it seemed necessary for the detectives to act promptly, in order, if possible, to beat out any extra safeguards that might be thrown around the works and forestall any possible attempt to escape on Schwartz's part.

They could do nothing until night, but plans were soon made to rend the veil of secrecy that had surrounded the plant, and to do it as soon after midnight as seemed safe.

The intervening hours were tedious ones, in spite of the fact that Schwartz went out of his way to seek the society of Nick and Chick that evening after supper. They gathered from the German's manner that he was not altogether at his ease; that he was, in fact, becoming a little worried about the presence of these four strangers, especially as they all frankly claimed to be interested in the radium situation.

If he had expected to pump the disguised detectives with any degree of success, however, he was disappointed. They easily managed to avoid every pitfall he dug for them, and it is not likely that he had any better luck with the government agents. As a matter of fact, the latter were not primarily interested in his game, whatever it was. They had come to Bitter River on quite another errand, and had no intention of interfering with Schwartz at that time, although it may be assumed that they would not fail to lay before the interior department, at Washington, any evidence of fraud which they might incidentally obtain.

Nick and his first lieutenant went to their rooms shortly before eleven o'clock. By that time most of the drummers and other guests, including the two government agents, had sought their beds. A few remained downstairs, however, among them being Schwartz, but one by one the detectives heard them mount creaking stairs. By half past twelve everything was still, except for sundry snores from neighboring rooms.

The two detectives had chosen quarters on the ground floor of the rambling wooden building, but in a wing at some little distance from the office and lobby. They had done so in order to facilitate matters, if it should seem desirable to visit Schwartz's plant at dead of night. Now that they had decided upon that course, all that was necessary was to climb out of one of their windows, drop down a yard or so in their stocking feet, and make way noiselessly out of the neighborhood.

When the opportunity seemed ripe they went about the task silently and swiftly. Fortunately for them, the hotel stood apart from other buildings, and there were no watchdogs about. They were, therefore, enabled to make their get-away with the utmost ease, and, having resumed their shoes, set off in the direction of the plant. They had taken the precaution to change their clothing and their appearance generally before they left the hotel, for their errand would doubtless involve an encounter with the night watchman at the reduction works, and they wished, if possible, to keep him from identifying them as two of the latest newcomers at the hotel.

They had made some roundabout inquiries in regard to this watchman, and had learned that the man—whose name was Lem Whipple—was a six-footer, and a former cow-puncher, who was reputed to be unusually quick on the trigger, and to have several significant notches on the barrel of his "gun." Doubtless, therefore, he would not prove to be an easy man to handle. He, in common with the rest of Schwartz's employees, was doubtless well aware of the fraud that was being perpetrated, and would probably be more vigilant on that account, and much more ready to defend the place, at the slightest provocation. Yet the prospect did not daunt Nick and Chick in the least. They had had some little experience as gun fighters, and believed that they could hold their own, even against the most notorious of Western "bad men."

Their approach to the works was stealthy and skillfully managed. They succeeded in locating the watchman in a little lean-to shed, which contained the only light about the place. If it could be managed, they desired above all things not to have any shooting, for the plant was right in the center of the village, and even a single shot would almost certainly arouse the place.

That being so, they hesitated about rushing Whipple while he was in the lighted office. If he was as fearless and ready with his weapon as rumor credited him with being, it was more than likely that he would manage to get in a shot before he was overpowered.

Accordingly, they waited patiently for half an hour or more, in the hope that he would make the rounds of the buildings, and give them a chance to pounce upon him from behind. That course would also be desirable because it promised to enable them to get the upper hand of him, and tie him up without allowing him to get a good view of them, even in their present disguises.

At last, just when their patience was beginning to get taxed, the big watchman laid aside his pipe, took his long legs down from the table, and prepared to make his usual tour of inspection. He lighted a lantern, buckled on his belt and holster—which had been lying on the table close at hand—and opened the shed door.

Nick and his assistant had been watching him through the little window in one side of the shed. Now they crouched lower behind a friendly pile of scrapped and rusty machinery, and had the satisfaction of seeing Whipple start in the other direction for his circuit of the big building, which he was evidently in the habit of making before he entered the structure.

They gave him the start of a few feet, then emerged from their hiding place, and padded after him as softly as a couple of catamounts. Just after he turned the first corner, and was out of sight of the lighted office, they closed in on him with businesslike precision.

Nick had brought with him a piece of iron which he had brought from the scrap heap behind which they had been hiding. He brought this down with nicely judged force on the back of the watchman's head, and at the same moment his assistant wrenched the lantern from Whipple's hand, dipped it suddenly and extinguished it, and then, throwing it aside, tackled the already toppling watchman in football fashion, and threw him heavily.

It would not have been called a clean tackle on the football field, for it was too high up. Chick knew what he was about, however, and had caught the man around the waist, instead of around the knees, for the very good reason that he wished to prevent him from drawing his revolver, in case Nick's blow had partially failed of its purpose.

As it turned out, Chick's maneuver was unnecessary, but it was well to make assurance doubly sure. Nick's heavy weapon had done its work with thoroughness, and between them, Whipple went down with hardly more than a gasp. He was quickly bound and gagged, with materials which the detectives brought with them, and left, still unconscious, in the deep shadows by the side of the building.

Feeling sure that the only obstacle which stood in their way was now removed, the two detectives sought the nearest door, unlocked it with one of the helpless watchman's keys, and began their long anticipated inspection of the plant. It did not take them more than ten minutes to satisfy themselves that it was just what they supposed. The building had been acquired merely as a blind. It contained absolutely no facilities for the actual reduction of carnotite or pitchblende, such as Nick had previously become familiar with in his study of the Lambert Company's plant at Paradise. There were tons and tons of ore there, to be sure, and the numerous, peculiar lemon-yellow spots in it indicated that it was indeed carnotite, but there had been obviously no attempt made to extract the radium.

It followed, therefore, that whatever quantity of the precious mineral was in Schwartz's possession, had been acquired by some other and easier means.

As for the force employed by Schwartz in and about the plant, its members were doubtless of the type that is not particularly troubled with moral scruples. They had been picked up here and there on the strength of their questionable records, in all probability, and were well paid for pretending to work, and for keeping their mouths shut.

As an aid to the deception, the windows were all found to have been painted over with white paint, thus making it impossible for curious outsiders to see what was going on within. Nick and Chick had also noticed signs outside, reading: "Positively No Admittance." These precautions, together with Schwartz's skillful use of the fact that radium processes are carefully guarded secrets, had served the rascal's purpose until now, and enabled him to pull the wool over the townspeople's eyes.

In the course of their tour of inspection, they entered what was obviously Schwartz's private office, and found there a small, old-fashioned safe. When the rays of Chick's pocket flash light first rested upon it, the young detective gave an exclamation.

"By gravy!" he ejaculated. "Do you suppose the old fox has got the rest of the radium stored in there? If he has, what's to hinder us from taking possession of it? We could open that toy bank with a hammer and chisel—or not much more, anyhow."

Nick shook his head.

"I don't think we'll try any safe breaking to-night," he said quietly. "In the first place, I don't believe Schwartz would have risked keeping any of the stolen radium in such an obvious place. He would unquestionably have remembered how easy it was for his agents to break into the up-to-date, specially constructed safes of the Lambert Company, and it would have occurred to him that the publicity given to those reports might easily lead some one to try his hand at a similar haul here."

"I guess you're right," agreed his assistant. "He's probably got the rest of the stuff salted away in some unlikely place. It may be about the plant here, for all we know, or hidden in his room at the hotel. But I suspect that it would be just as well for us not to go looking for it until we make ourselves known here in town, and have the German placed under arrest."

"I was just coming to that," Nick declared, with an emphatic nod. "We must remember that we are not in New York, where we are known and given considerable latitude. On the contrary, we are in a pretty primitive Western community—the kind of place where they are given to acting first, and investigating afterward. It might not be good for our health if we were caught at this moment. The circumstances would look bad for us, and we might not be given any opportunity to explain. I am afraid we certainly would not be, if we were caught in anything that looked like robbery, especially as the town seems to be pretty strong for Schwartz. He is known and looked up to, and doubtless would have a lot of influence with the authorities, even if the rabble gave the authorities a chance at us, which would be unlikely. No, we'll have to handle this thing with gloves. We are running a good deal of

risk, right now, but fortunately the watchman did not get a look at us, and if we have ordinary luck we ought to be able to cover our trail and get back to the hotel safe and sound. We've done all we can to-night, and——"

He stopped abruptly.

A board in the floor close by, seemingly just outside the office door, had creaked ominously.

CHAPTER V.

HOT WORK IN A CORNER.

They knew it would have been impossible for the watchman to have released himself in that time, even if he had recovered consciousness.

It seemed very likely that Whipple had been found, but there could be no question about the fact that somebody had discovered their presence in the plant, and was after them.

Nick and his assistant found time to wonder if the reflection from the carefully guarded rays of their flash lamps had been seen from the road by some belated passer-by. That was as far as they got, however, for the figure which slipped into view with leveled revolver a second later put all doubts at rest, and left only a very disagreeable certainty.

They had preferred to keep their flash lights burning, and to concentrate the rays of them upon the open doorway, rather than remain in darkness and uncertainty. Therefore the features of the man who had cornered them under such compromising circumstances were plainly visible, as soon as they came into range.

The face was that of Henry L. Schwartz, about the last person they cared to meet just then.

And just behind, towering above him head and shoulders, was the tall form of Lem Whipple, the watchman, his face distorted with rage at the treatment he had received.

"Up mit your hands, you thieves!" ordered Schwartz.

"That's right—put up your mitts!" Whipple advised menacingly.

It was the time for quick thinking on the part of the two detectives, if they wished to think another day. The German's presence there at one o'clock in the morning suggested that he had become suspicious for some reason, if only because of the presence at the hotel of four strangers, whose motives he instinctively questioned. In any case, it was clear that he would probably conclude that his secret had been penetrated by the intruders, no matter what their original motives for entrance might have been. His guilty conscience could be counted on to do that much.

Consequently it was almost a foregone conclusion, that, if Schwartz and the watchman had their way, the two detectives would never leave the structure alive.

Nick and Chick realized this in a flash, and acted accordingly. In the moment or two between the warning creak of the floor and the appearance of Schwartz's face in the doorway, Chick had managed to shift the flash light from his right to his left hand, and to draw his automatic. The action was instinctive, mechanical, and startlingly rapid. His chief had improved the opportunity by doing likewise, except that his searchlight had already been in his left hand, and all that it was necessary for him to do was to draw his revolver.

Now, instead of obeying the command to throw up their hands, they opened fire without warning.

Nick shot a fraction of a second in advance of his assistant, and that was all the hint the latter needed. The sound of the firing would doubtless arouse the settlement and bring a crowd in short order, but that could not be helped now. They were obliged to make the best of a bad job.

Their quick action, taking the others by surprise as it did, turned the tables, and their ten-shot automatics were much superior in quickness to the opposing arms, for Schwartz had only an ordinary "bulldog" revolver, while Whipple's was of the big, heavy-service type.

Consequently, it would have been quite possible for the detectives to have killed both of their opponents at the first fire. They did not desire to do that, however, and, as a result, the work they had cut out for themselves was somewhat more difficult and dangerous. As if they had rehearsed the scene again and again, each picked his respective man and attempted to disable the arm holding the weapon.

Nick, assuming the watchman to be the more dangerous, fired at him; while Chick, noting out of the corner of his eye the direction of his chief's aim, devoted his own attention to the German, who was in advance.

So rapid and unlooked-for had been their response to the reiterated commands, that, between them, they succeeded in firing at least three shots before the first one came in reply. It was from Whipple's revolver, but it sped past harmlessly, for Nick and Chick had taken pains to hold their flash lamps ahead of them, and as far as possible to the left. As a result, they were almost invisible, whereas the German and Whipple were directly in the path of the two searchlights.

Chick's first shot struck and broke Schwartz's wrist, and the German's revolver went clattering to the floor. Nick's target was a much more difficult one, however, for the lanky watchman was lurking behind his employer, and most of his body was shielded by that of Schwartz.

Indeed, it was not until the latter shrank aside from the pain of his wound that he got a fair show at Whipple. Carter's little weapon then spoke again, and the bullet found its mark.

Instead of dropping his weapon, however, the watchman transferred it to his left hand, simultaneously dodging to one side and taking refuge behind the partition.

From that vantage point he fired again, and this time the bullet came uncomfortably close to Nick's head. In fact, it went through his soft hat, and clipped off a lock of his hair.

Nor was the German prepared to give up the fight, as it soon appeared. He had collapsed to his knees after Chick had wounded him, and for the time being the detectives attributed his action to pain or fear. It may have been partly the former, but, at any rate, the German took occasion while in that attitude to recover his weapon unnoticed, after which he rolled out of sight beyond the doorway, taking the opposite side of the opening to that chosen by Whipple.

The situation was again a critical one for Nick and his companion. Their two antagonists, though wounded, were under cover, and between them and the outer door. Moreover, they could not hope that the repeated shots, muffled as they had been by the big building, had failed to be heard in the surrounding village, and consequently

there was the likelihood that a mob of excited men would be in evidence in two or three minutes.

So far as their own safety was concerned, it looked as if it would have been much better if they had seen fit to inflict more serious wounds on Schwartz and Whipple, while they had a chance.

If they had been in an older and more settled community, especially where Nick was well known, they would have had nothing to fear from the coming of help; quite the contrary, in fact. But now they knew that if they were found there under those suspicious circumstances, that their chances of gaining a hearing would be decidedly slim. The best thing to do, therefore, seemed to be to try to make their escape, desperate as the venture appeared, and, if possible, to creep back to the hotel by some roundabout way, and climb in the open window of their room. In their hearts they feared that this was out of the question, but they meant to have a run for their money, at any rate. Besides, anything would be better than being caught there like rats in a trap.

Nick and Chick had both sought refuge behind the little safe which stood out in the room, for Whipple had opened fire around the corner of the door casing with his left hand, and the German had followed his example. Now, the detectives heads came together, a few whispered words were exchanged, and then, having got their bearings and extinguished their searchlights, they stole from behind the safe. Nick made for one side of the door, while Chick made for the other.

They meant business.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DETECTIVES ARE ARRESTED.

The approach to the partition was fortunately unobstructed on both sides of the doorway leading out of the office.

Nick crept toward the partition a few feet to the left of the door from his angle, and Chick skirted about in the darkness, and similarly approached the right-hand side of the door. Their object was to take their lurking enemies by surprise, if they could, and still further disable them—enough, at least, to allow for a dash for liberty, without too much danger of being picked off from the rear.

Nick had a shorter distance to go, in order to reach the partition, which he did without mishap. Touching the matched boards with his left elbow—his searchlight, extinguished now, was still in his left hand—he made for the opening. He could tell by the sound of movements on the other side that Whipple was stirring and getting uneasy as a result of the suspense. The sound served to locate the man accurately enough, and presently the detective thrust his automatic around the corner and fired. He was just as likely to kill the watchman as to miss him, but it was no time now for half measures. Evidently his bullet had not missed, at any rate, for a groan that was half a curse escaped Whipple's lips, and the man evidently reeled against the thin partition, for the boards shook and gave under his weight.

Nick had paused for a moment or two after getting into position, and before firing. That delay, slight as it was, had permitted his assistant to reach the other side of the door with equal quietness. Consequently not more than a second elapsed before another report rang out.

Chick had fired, but apparently he had missed, for there was nothing to indicate that Schwartz had been struck again.

Once more Chick's automatic spoke without bringing any inkling of the German's condition or whereabouts.

"Come! We can't wait!" Nick whispered loudly, dashing through the door.

Chick did not take breath to answer him, but followed close at his heels. Neither of them knew at what moment death might flash out at them, but they were used to such risks.

Obviously the watchman was having troubles of his own, for no shot came from that side of the doorway, but not so with Schwartz. The German must have suspected what was in the wind. At any rate, he had crawled away from the doorway, so that he was out of range of Chick's shot. Probably he had taken refuge behind something.

Whatever had happened, he did not leave the detectives in ignorance of his whereabouts after they quitted the office. Another shot, accompanied by a spurt of flame, came from one corner of the room, part of which had been partitioned off to form the office. Luckily the speeding detectives were almost, if not quite, invisible in the darkness, and Schwartz's aim was poor, owing to the fact that he was holding his weapon in his left hand.

In spite of that, nevertheless, the shot tore through Chick's clothing at the shoulder and slightly scratched the latter.

Both Chick and Nick responded to the fire as they ran, but they did not silence Schwartz, who got in another shot, also wild, before they reached the outer door at the other end of the big room.

This had been left open by the detectives, in order to facilitate their departure. The fact had doubtless been taken advantage of by Schwartz after he had found and released the bound watchman. The two later comers had also left it open, however, and the faint starlight that filtered in had served to reveal the exit to the escaping detectives.

Practically unharmed, Nick and Chick sprang into the open air, after about as warm an encounter as any one would care to take part in. Schwartz's last shot was still echoing in their ears, and they half expected to be confronted by the advance guard of the crowd that they were certain would soon collect.

As it happened, however, the door by which they had escaped did not open upon the main road. On the contrary, it was at one end of the building, near where they had left the dazed watchman fifteen or twenty minutes before. That being so, they found no one in the immediate vicinity as they emerged, although excited shots and hurried footsteps were plainly audible from the front of the building.

They had just time to whip around to the back of the long structure when the leaders of the crowd burst around the other corner. The margin was too narrow to suit Nick and Chick, and they realized, with sinking hearts, that in probably not more than half a minute the newcomers would have heard enough to start them off again in hot pursuit of the supposed robbers.

But they were safe for the moment, and they lost no time in making off, skulking along in the shadows at the rear of the plant, and hoping against hope that they would not meet anybody coming from that direction. That experience was spared them, probably because there were

no residences or boarding houses near enough to the rear of the plant to have allowed the shots to be heard by the inmates of them.

None the less, the plight of Nick and his assistant was an unenviable one. They were quite at home, so far as giving a couple of criminals the slip was concerned, but in this case they found themselves with a good many of the sensations of fugitives from justice—and still more of the sensations experienced by those who are fleeing from an irate mob.

If they could only reach the hotel and remove their disguises they hoped they would be safe, but even that was by no means certain.

Luckily, in seeking safety, they had thrown themselves into a section of the town that was characterized by factories, warehouses, and lumber yards, rather than by dwelling houses. To this circumstance they owed the fact that they succeeded in getting well away from the radium works before there was much chance of their being observed. And, by the time they reached the residence streets—if the dusty, shanty-lined roads of Bitter River may be dignified by such a term—the little settlement had been thoroughly aroused, and most of the men had flocked toward the scene of the disturbance.

By slipping through alleys, while the women and children were hanging out of the front windows, they managed to work their way back toward the hotel by a circuitous route, and at last the open window yawned a welcome in front of them. Congratulating themselves that they had run the gantlet safely, they stole eagerly but alertly toward the opening.

Curiously enough, they had met no one face to face, and had apparently outdistanced those who had doubtless started in search of them after reënforcements had reached the plant. Their luck seemingly held good, but they realized that many of the rooms in the flimsy wooden hotel were lighted.

It had not occurred to them before that the excitement would naturally have communicated itself to the hotel, and that most of the occupants, perhaps all of them, had emerged from their rooms by this time to see what the trouble was. That meant that their failure to do so might look suspicious.

Well, so be it. If they could only climb into the window without being seen and remove the rest of their make-ups—they had already got rid of portions of their disguises during the flight—they could appear and make a bluff at being interested in what was transpiring. They were confident that they could play their part as well as it could be played, but it remained to be seen whether it would be successful or not.

They crawled through the open window, apparently without being seen. As soon as they were in the room they started to throw off the clothing they had worn for the occasion.

A minute or so later, however, while the rough garments which they had discarded were still lying about the room, heavy, determined steps approached their door, and its thin panels resounded under thunderous knocking.

It looked as if the game was up.

"Open the door!" came an authoritative voice, couched in gruffest and most hostile tones.

Nick and his assistant had donned their own trousers, but were still in their shirt sleeves. Carter unhesitatingly went to the door, unlocked it, and threw it open, having first slipped his automatic into his pocket, however. He and Chick had found time to reload their weapons, and it seemed likely now that their precaution had been a wise one.

"What's the matter, gentlemen?" Nick asked quietly and naturally. "We were just dressing to see what all the excitement was about."

"I guess that you fellows know better than we do what it's all about!" was the response, as the man who had evidently done the knocking strode into the room.

He was stout, broad-shouldered, and ruddy, with a pair of gray, gimletlike eyes, under bushy, sandy brows. He wore an open vest over a gray flannel shirt, and pinned to the breast of the latter was a sheriff's badge. Behind him trooped several other men, and still others came crowding along the hall.

"What do you mean by that?" Chick demanded, drawing himself up, with a well-assumed look of anger.

"And you might explain what you're bringing this crowd of men into our room for at this hour of the night," Nick added.

"Oh, fergit it, you two!" the sheriff counseled disgustedly. "That 'how-dare-you-sir!' stuff don't go here. We've got you dead to rights, and you're goin' to come along with us. One of the boys saw you pussy footin' it through that window just now."

"What are you talking about?" Nick countered, putting on the most bewildered expression imaginable. "I suppose you're the sheriff, but I'll be hanged if I know what you think we've done, or what window you're talking about."

"Ain't they cute, the little innocents!" sneered somebody in the crowd, and a hoarse guffaw went around the rapidly increasing audience.

"Shut up and put up your flippers!" ordered the sheriff, poking a big revolver forward, as if to add emphasis to his words.

There was nothing for Nick and Chick to do but obey, much as it went against the grain to do so. They knew only too well the kind of men with whom they had to deal, and realized that if they showed the slightest inclination to resist, their action would doubtless be the signal for a general fusillade that would close their careers in about two seconds. Therefore their hands went up obediently. Neither of them had drawn his weapon.

"Oh, we'll oblige you if you insist," remarked Nick; "but all the same, you're giving us a pretty raw deal, gentlemen. You might tell us at least who or what you think we are, and what the charge against us is."

"We don't give a whoop who you are!" declared the sheriff, as he felt them over systematically, and pocketed their weapons with a grunt of satisfaction. "All we're interested in jest now is the fact that you tried to rob Mr. Schwartz's works, after knockin' Lem Whipple, the watchman, on the bean, and tyin' him up. You fellows is in bad, and we're goin' to learn you that you can't come to Bitter River and git away with anything like that. It's the lockup for yours, and you better be mighty thankful that Randy Wiggins—that's me—was on hand to-night to keep these here boys from puttin' their amachoor notions of justice into practice on you."

With that, a couple of pairs of heavy handcuffs were snapped on the detectives' wrists, and they were marched away through rows of lowering faces, and amid much

grumbling and cursing; and many threatening looks and gestures.

They tried repeatedly to explain the situation, but it was of no use. The sheriff refused to listen to them, and it was evident that their efforts only inflamed the crowd, which still hung threateningly at their heels, and seemed bent upon mischief, if it were given half a chance.

Under this novel, and by no means reassuring situation, Nick and his assistant were marched to the little jail and shoved into a cell.

CHAPTER VII.

BEHIND THE BARS.

"Well, Nick, here's a nice kettle of fish!" remarked Chick, while the clanging of the cell door was still echoing in their ears. "It looks as if we were going to get a little taste of justice served in Western fashion, with hot tomales on the side, and a dash of chile con carne."

Nick Carter nodded his head thoughtfully.

"It ought to feel like old times to you, Chick," he replied. "You were something of a 'wild Westerner' yourself when I first ran across you."

"I suppose so," agreed his assistant, "but I ceased to be one, some years ago, and I can't say that I'm enjoying this experience particularly. Anybody could see with half an eye that those fellows were just aching to fill us full of lead, or string us up, and by the time Schwartz has played a few more tunes on their local pride, and all the rest of it, there's no knowing what may happen."

"That's perfectly true," Nick admitted soberly. "Disguising ourselves and playing the game alone without taking the authorities into our confidence beforehand seems to be an extra hazardous game to play here. We've always got away with it in the past, though, and I haven't any doubt we shall do so now. The sheriff ought to have cooled down by morning, and then we'll simply have to make them listen to us. There are papers enough among our things at the hotel to make it easy enough to satisfy themselves that our story is true, if they'll only take the trouble to investigate it. Patsy and the rest of them in New York will wire confirmations quick enough if they're asked about us, so will the Lambert Radium Company, and, as a matter of fact, I told Inspector Bainbridge that we were coming out here, and why we were going to do it."

"That's all right," returned Chick. "It would be simple enough almost anywhere else, but I don't like the looks of things here a little bit. You know what they've been in the habit of doing to horse thieves out West for a good many years. This place is comparatively new, and its justice is evidently of the rough-and-ready sort. You must admit that they have plenty of reason for thinking that they pretty nearly caught us with the goods. We are strangers here, and it is naturally something more than a coincidence to them that this supposed attempt at robbery and incidental gun play should have taken place while we were in town. Schwartz, or somebody, must have come to the conclusion that we are at the bottom of it, and they laid in wait for us and saw us sneak back into the hotel through the window. That's about all the evidence they need in a place like this, and when you add to that the influence that Schwartz evidently has, and the fact that we wounded both him and Whipple, it makes it look as if we were on a decidedly hot griddle. That German crook will do everything in his power to stir up sentiment against us, and the gang we saw wouldn't need much more to bring them back here with blood in their eyes, and a couple of nice, long-noosed ropes in their hands. That's what we're up against, Nick, and I'm afraid we can't afford to wait for the sheriff to cool down."

"I shouldn't be surprised if you were right, my boy," Nick said quietly. "How about those two government agents? I saw them hanging around in the background. You had some talk with them. Did you tell them who we were?"

Chick shook his head.

"I didn't give any names," he answered. "When I had satisfied myself that they were what they claimed to be, I tipped them off that we were New York detectives, and they got confidential, as I told you. That seems to show that they believed me, but they certainly didn't make any attempt to interfere to-night, and, from the looks of them, I should judge that they have gone over to the enemy. I don't know that I can blame them under the circumstances. They may have been under suspicion themselves, at first, being strangers here, and that would have made them rather sore. Besides, they are wise enough to know that my claims might all have been bunk."

"Of course," agreed Nick. "It looks to me as if they were our best bet, though. If we can only get into touch with them, and if they use their influence with the sheriff, or send word to New York if he refuses to do so, it ought to be easy enough to change the complexion of things here before long. They could search our room, or insist upon Wiggins doing so in their presence, and that would bring the facts to light. We can't hope to keep back anything now in regard to our errand here. We'll have to put all our cards on the table in order to save ourselves. Fortunately, we have all the evidence we want against Schwartz, and if we can once convince the sheriff and get him to act promptly, the German, and some of his men, at least, ought to be nailed before they could leave town."

"They ought to be," returned Chick. "But there are altogether too many 'ifs' about the thing to suit me. Wiggins has shown that he can be as deaf as a post when he wants to be; and, as for the government agents, they are doubtless here on a more or less secret errand, just as we are, and it is more than likely that they won't feel free to come out into the open in our defense, for fear of queering their own game, whatever it is."

"That may not be any joke, either," confessed Nick. "It doesn't look very cheerful, does it? This jail, too, is more strongly built than is frequently the case in such places, so that I'm afraid there isn't any use in our trying to break out. Even if we should do so we'd be sure to be caught, and there's no doubt but we'd get a short rope, and a knotty one before we had a chance to do much talking."

They had been given a cell by themselves, and, so far as they could tell, the jail housed no other prisoners that night. They felt free to talk therefore, but, before they could hit upon any plan, the big door at the end of the corridor opened again, and footsteps approached. Their visitors turned out to be Sheriff Wiggins and Schwartz. They halted in the corridor and looked through the steel bars of the cell door.

"Well, here's your birds, Mr. Schwartz," the sheriff announced triumphantly. "We boys managed to git some salt on their tails, you see."

The German was fairly trembling with rage, and his little piglike eyes glared balefully at the prisoners. His right hand was in a sling, and his left was fingering it nervously and incessantly.

"So? Dot was your game, eh?" he snarled. "You've come here und talk with me und make out that you have money enough to buy up the whole country if you want; und then you lay out mine watchman und try to break into mine safe. Then, when I comes along, you shoots me und him up, eh? I guess, mebbe, you won't shoot nobody else for some time. You crooks from the East needn't think you can come out here und do what you please."

Nick Carter did not care to listen to any more of this than he could help. It seemed to be as good an opportunity to turn the tables as he was likely to have that night, and he instantly decided to fire his broadside. Ignoring the German completely, he looked straight at the sheriff.

"Wiggins," he said quietly, "did you ever hear of Nick Carter, the New York detective?"

"Who ain't heard of Nick Carter?" was the grudging reply. "What's he got to do with you, though, I'd like to know?"

"I am Nick Carter," the detective informed him, "and this is Chick, my chief assistant. We came here to Bitter River to obtain evidence against Schwartz, and we've got it to burn. I must ask you to arrest him, sheriff, and to release us. He is the man who is behind those great radium robberies in New York and Colorado, and he's been fooling you people to a fare-you-well."

CHAPTER VIII.

A FRUITLESS EFFORT.

The series of expressions on Henry L. Schwartz's face during this unexpected accusation would have made an interesting study. Open-mouthed, almost ludicrous surprise was followed by white-lipped fear, and that in its turn gave place to red-hot rage.

The sheriff, too, looked dumfounded at first. He eyed Nick and Chick questioningly, and then turned his gaze on the German. By that time, however, the latter's face revealed nothing but an excusable, if towering anger. Schwartz seemed to be on the verge of an apoplectic stroke. He was trying to speak, but making hard work of it, and his uninjured hand was working nervously, as it clutched one of the bars of the door.

"Himmel!" he managed to ejaculate at last. "Did you ever hear anything like dot? It's a lie, sheriff! You know me und you know it's a lie! Nick Carter—listen to dot! The first thing we know the feller will be tellin' us he's the President of the United States, mebbe!"

With that he managed to fetch a forced laugh, putting his free hand to his side as he did so.

"Ho, ho!" he cried, shaking all over. "Dot's the best joke I've heard since mine first wife died!"

Apparently the sheriff took it as a joke, too, or at least tried to make himself believe that he did. It was a case of one of the town's great men against a couple of strangers, and the result was almost inevitable, unless Nick were allowed to prove his case.

Wiggins echoed the German's laugh.

"It sure is a joke, Mr. Schwartz," he commented. "We'll have to tell the boys about this, all right!"

"You'll find out about how much of a joke it is," Nick assured him sternly. "This man's son, Joe Schwartz, is now in jail in Denver, where I put him for one of the robberies. When this Schwartz's radium institute opened up in New York a while ago, I decided that there was something fishy about it, and came out here to see this wonderful plant of his. He's certainly played you Bitter Riverites for suckers. He's never produced a cent's worth of radium here. He hasn't reduced a pound of the ore he has carried from his claim. It's all in the plant—tons of it. The only radium he has ever extracted was 'extracted' from the Lambert Radium Reduction Company's safe in the Halibridge Building, New York, and from their plant at Paradise, Colorado. I don't ask you to believe me if you don't want to, but you'll find documents enough in our rooms at the hotel to establish our identity, and the nature of our errand."

His circumstantial statements and apparent earnestness had evidently impressed the sheriff. It was plain that Wiggins felt himself between two fires. He found it hard to believe that Nick's words were all a bluff, but at the same time he did not want to be convinced that Schwartz was a rascal, and he did not care to have the influential German think that he was taking sides against him.

"You've got that down fine, partner," he said sarcastically, "but I reckon we'll take Mr. Schwartz's word unless you can deliver the goods, and I'm blamed certain you can't do that!"

"Dot's right, Wiggins!" cried the German. "Spoken like a man! Go ahead und search their rooms. You can't hurt mine feelings by doin' it! I ain't got nothin' to fear from these two scamps. What radium I've got, I got honestly, und nobody can prove dot it ain't so. As for mine boy, Joe, he's in business in San Francisco, und never was in no jail in his life! Any one who says he was——"

"Never mind about that, Mr. Schwartz," counseled the sheriff, taking the irate German by the arm. "They'll git their medicine—you can bet on that! We'll search their rooms, and be tickled to death to do it, too. Come along! And when we get there," he continued, looking back over his shoulder as he piloted Schwartz out of the corridor, "I reckon you guys'll find out that you've bit off more than you can chaw!"

When the door of the little cell house had slammed behind the sheriff and his companion, the two detectives looked at each other silently for a moment. Chick's eyes were sparkling, and he looked somewhat excited.

"You certainly played that card just at the right time, chief!" he exclaimed admiringly. "If Schwartz hadn't been here you would have had the sheriff eating out of your hand in another minute. As it is, I believe that he's more than half convinced, and he'll undoubtedly go through our things at the hotel. That's all we ask. When he gets through with that, Schwartz will be laughing out of the other corner of his mouth."

"Don't you believe he will," replied Nick, shaking his head skeptically.

"What do you mean? Why not?"

"For the simple reason that Wiggins won't find anything in our rooms to substantiate our claims."

"He won't? I'd like to know why he won't!"

"Because our Teutonic friend has already taken occasion to remove everything of the sort."

Nick's assistant looked aghast, and then indulged in a low whistle.

"By George!" he ejaculated. "Do you think that's what he's been up to?"

"I haven't the slightest doubt of it," Nick returned. Or, if he hasn't done so already, he'll find a way to sidetrack the sheriff long enough to attend to that little matter before Wiggins gets a show at our things. The Dutchman has something up his sleeve, you may be sure, otherwise he wouldn't have been so willing to agree to a search being made."

"I never thought of that," admitted Chick, "but I'm afraid you're right. I thought he was just stalling as long as he could, but he'll die hard, and it would be just like him to do some such trick as that. If that's the case, what're we going to do now?"

Nick shrugged his shoulders.

"I can tell you better later," he said.

"You didn't say anything about the government agents," commented his assistant.

"No, because I didn't want to embarrass them if I could help it," was the answer. "Besides, I hope to get out of this mess without assistance from anybody else. As it has turned out, we may have to appeal to them yet, however."

"If your claim gets noised abroad they may believe it and offer their assistance," suggested Chick.

Nick's response was not very hopeful.

"Perhaps," he said. "Schwartz is not to be despised, though, and he's fighting with his back to the wall. He could doubtless fake up a version of this affair that would tell very heavily against us if he put his mind to it, and I have an idea that's just about what he'll do."

"I don't see how."

"Wait, and perhaps you will later on," Nick remarked. "Meanwhile, there's nothing for us to do but to await developments."

It was about three-quarters of an hour later when Sheriff Wiggins came storming into the cell house, and approached the detectives' cage. It did not take the keen eyes of Nick Carter and his assistant more than a second to read what the result of the search had been, and to see that the sheriff was now utterly hostile to them.

"Well, I pawed over your stuff, you rascals," he announced. "You pretended to be so blamed anxious about it, you had me guessing for a little bit. I'll have to hand you that, anyway. I found nothing that would prove your yarn, and you knew mighty well I wouldn't. Consarn me if I know what good you thought a bluff like that was goin' to do yer! I wouldn't be in you fellers' boots tonight for a hundred thousand dollars, spot cash! You've got considerable on the wrong of this here town, let me tell yer, and the boys ain't likely to let you off easy. You've stuck up one of our leadin' lights and put a hole through his wrist, and what's more, your other victim, Lem Whipple, is worser than when he was first took! He's got a bullet in his arm an' one in his side, an' if he cashes in, you two will be strung up for murder—if the boys don't take a notion to break in here beforehand, and 'tend to that little formality themselves. They won't if Randy Wiggins can help it. It's my duty to protect my prisoners, no matter if I do think they're low-down dirt, and not worth enough good rope to hang 'em with, but if the place gets real wrought up, as it's done more'n once, I ain't makin' no promise about bein' able to pull yer through!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE MOB SURROUNDS THE JAIL.

Nick waited impatiently until Wiggins had finished this cheerful strain of conversation, then he came close to the bars of the door and looked the sheriff full in the eyes.

"Look here, Wiggins!" he said. "Do you want to keep the confidence of those who elected you?"

"That's what I aim to do," was the answer. "But what have you got to do about it?"

"Just this," Nick replied sternly: "We are just what we claim to be, and the statements I made you a while ago were facts; every one of them. I am Nick Carter, and this man with me is Chick Carter, my principal assistant and adopted son. If anything happens to us while we are in your charge, or here in Bitter River, you'll never hear the last of it, and your two-for-five village never will, either. Henry L. Schwartz is just what I told you he was, and if you had looked at him when I first made the accusation, instead of giving him time to recover his nerve, you would have known that I was telling the truth. He has stolen, or caused to be stolen, six hundred thousand dollars' worth of radium from the Lambert Radium Reduction Company, and his plant here is nothing but a fake, as we found out to-night. That is what we went there for, and we got all the evidence we wanted. I was practically certain, however, when you left here with him, that you wouldn't find what I told you you would find in our rooms, for the very simple reason that I saw Schwartz was suspiciously willing to have the search made. I didn't need you to come back and tell me you had been unsuccessful, because I guessed that he had smelled a rat after finding us in the reduction works, as he calls it, and had caused all evidence of our identity to be removed from the rooms at the hotel. I don't blame you for doubting us, under the circumstances, because we are strangers here, and you think you know Schwartz. You don't, I can assure you of that, and, as for us, there are plenty of other ways for you to test my story."

"You sure ought to make a great poker player, pardner," scoffed the sheriff. "You can hold a single pair and make the other fellers think you had a royal flush. Take it from me, you're some little bluffer! Do they foal your kind right along steady in the East, or are you something special?"

"'Cut that out, sheriff, and look me in the eye," Nick commanded, putting his face still closer to Wiggins. "If you don't know when a man is telling you the truth, for the love of Mike, where do you get the nerve to hold down such a job! I'm doing this for your good, as well as our own. I'm giving you every chance to keep out of trouble!"

"Well, what wild-goose chase do you want to send me off on, now?" demanded the sheriff.

The question was evidently forced from him reluctantly. It was plain that he was weakening once more before Nick's forcefulness and appearance of sincerity.

"There's no wild-goose chase about it," the detective answered promptly. "This is something that Schwartz can't butt in on. Rout out a telegraph operator, if necessary, and send some rush messages to the people whose

names I will give you, asking them about us. That will settle the matter once for all, and it's the least you can possibly do. Send one to my assistant, Patsy Garvan, in New York—I'll give you the address in a moment—one to Matthew A. Lambert, president of the Lambert Radium Reduction Company, and one to Inspector Bainbridge, at New York police headquarters. You might also communicate with the warden of the jail in Denver, get a description of the prisoner who calls himself Adolph Steinmetz, and see if it doesn't remind you of Schwartz. The man is Schwartz's son, as I told you, and I would suggest that you ask Schwartz for the young fellow's address. He said Joe was working in San Francisco, you remember. Pin him down about it, if you want to get this thing straight. He'll hem and haw, unless I miss my guess, and if he gives you an address, finally, it will be easy enough for you to find out that no such person is known there. Will you do this?"

"I'll do it, partner," was the prompt reply. "You may be four-flushing, but if you are you're the slickest proposition I ever run acrost! Give me them addresses, and I'll have the wire sizzling before you can say Jack Robinson."

"Thanks, Wiggins. You'll never regret it. That isn't all, though."

"What are you goin' to spring on me now?"

"I'm not going to 'spring' anything," Nick returned quietly. "I'm simply going to remind you of one or two things, sheriff: In the first place, you've been kind enough to hint at a possible lynching. Just remember that if you have any reason to fear that outcome, it is your duty to swear in a posse of special deputies, and guard us as strongly as possible until the danger blows over—at least until you have time to prove the truth or falsity of my claims. I am inclined to agree with you that there is a strong possibility of trouble of that sort, for I believe that Schwartz will do everything in his power to stir up feeling against us.

"Another thing: You will not only be held responsible for our safety, but I shall hold you responsible for Schwartz himself, and the men who have assisted him in this farce here in Bitter River. I don't expect you to arrest them until you have received answers to these telegrams, but I must insist that you keep an eye on them, and see that they don't get out of your sight. If you let them slip through your fingers you'll be in still more hot water before you know it. Just remember that!"

This attitude on the part of a prisoner was obviously a novelty in the sheriff's experience, and he was naturally inclined to resent it. He soon went away, however, and though he was grumbling as he went, Nick and Chick were certain that he would do as Nick had requested.

"You certainly talked Dutch to that sheriff person, chief," Chick commented admiringly. "Let's hope he imitates the busy little bees, and that we'll get out of this hole before it becomes too hot for us. Meanwhile, though, I suppose we might as well take a cat nap."

Nick was quite willing to fortify himself with a little nap for whatever was in store for them, and the detectives were soon stretched out on the two hard bunks which the cell contained.

But they were not destined to enjoy their well-earned repose for very long.

It seemed as if their heads had barely touched the rough, coarse pillows before they were aroused by the excited voice of Wiggins, and the rattling of the cell door.

"Hey, wake up there!" the sheriff was shouting. "There's a mob on its way here lickety-split! They ain't more'n a block away now, and this place is goin' to smell of brimstone in about two shakes! I've sworn in ten or a dozen deputies and posted 'em around the jail, but I don't know as I can count on 'em. They didn't want to serve for a cent, and I had to pull my gun on some of 'em before I got 'em. I'll do my durndest to keep 'em in line, but things looks bad. I sent them telegrams off, but they won't do you folks much good anyway you fix it, as things lay now. That bein' so, I'm goin' to do something I've never done before. I'm goin' to give you boys a couple of revolvers and let you defend yourselves as best you can, if they once break in here. The odds is all against you, and I reckon you're welcome to that much of a show. Here, take 'em!"

By that time Nick and Chick were in the middle of the floor. Now they took the two big revolvers which the sheriff thrust through the bars.

"You're pretty white, Wiggins," Nick told him. "We'll remember this if the gang gives us much chance to do any remembering."

There was no time for anything more. Hoarse shouts and shrill yells were already rising on all sides of the little jail, and the sheriff rushed out of the cell house, slamming and locking the door behind him.

The two detectives looked at each other and then down at the weapons in their hands, as they listened to the menacing uproar and wondered how long Wiggins and his unwilling deputies could hold the intending lynchers at bay.

They were certainly gathering new experiences at a dizzy rate.

CHAPTER X.

A WARM RECEPTION.

The volume of the shouting indicated that the mob was a large one. Schwartz and his unscrupulous employees had evidently done their work well, and had brought public sentiment in the place to the boiling point.

The sheriff and his small force of deputies would, of course, find it impossible to resist by force, even if those sworn in should remain true to the responsibilities thrust upon them, which was very unlikely. The only thing that could prevent an actual invasion of the jail and a bloody climax was the moral influence which Wiggins might be able to exert, if he proved equal to the emergency. That, again, was a doubtful matter. The sheriff was naturally not yet altogether convinced that Nick and Chick were what they claimed to be, and his uncertainty would probably influence his attitude to a considerable extent.

Many sheriffs have fought to the last ditch under such circumstances, even though they were certain that the prisoners they guarded were guilty of the most hideous crimes, but many others, on the other hand, had felt no such stern sense of responsibility. They had made a show of resistance, and then given in to save their own skins, and to avoid antagonizing those whose votes had elected them.

The voices outside swelled to a sinister roar, and Nick and Chick could plainly hear the leaders of the mob demanding their lives.

They could also hear the sheriff's answering bellow of defiance, and his threats to his deputies to stand firm or be shot down by him for their failure to support his lawful authority.

Presently shots rang out—many of them. Few bullets struck the building, however. The crowd was evidently firing in the air, for the most part, in order to intimidate the sheriff and his men. Some of the shots must have gone uncomfortably close above Wiggins' head, however, for his voice took on new evidences of wrath as he commanded the crowd to cease firing and listen to him. He succeeded, at length, in getting something like silence, and launched into a crude, but forceful appeal for fair play.

He reminded his hearers that they—those of them, at least, who were bona-fide citizens of the town—had voted him into the position of trust which he held, and that it was the height of inconsistency for them now to demand that he should prove false to that trust. He told them of Nick's claims, and, without expressing himself in regard to them, urged that nothing rash should be done, at least until there had been an opportunity to prove them true or false.

He even went so far as to suggest that Bitter River might not know all there was to be known about Henry L. Schwartz. The German, after all, was not a regular resident of the place, according to Wiggins, having first appeared in Bitter River only a few months before. They owed no great loyalty to him, therefore, and it would be unwise to let his version of the affair have too much weight.

The sheriff got no farther. Even if Schwartz himself was not in the crowd, most, if not all of his hirelings doubtless were, and they now incited the mob afresh.

The sheriff's voice, big as it was, was drowned out completely, and the listening detectives were left in no doubt about the seriousness of the situation. They heard the crowd surge forward on all sides. Scores of shots rang out immediately, followed by the crash of falling glass, as the jail windows were shattered.

It is probable that the handful of deputies were thoroughly cowed from the start, even if they had not actually joined in the raid.

Wiggins, alone, stood firm, judging by the sounds.

"Take that, and that, then!" they heard him shout. "You fellers'll never git into this here jail till you've downed me! There's another of you that knows now that Randy Wiggins means what he says, I reckon!"

The shots were now coming so thick and fast that the detectives could not, of course, identify those from the sheriff's revolvers, but they knew from his words that he was firing into the crowd, and that he meant to resist as long as he could.

Clearly, though, he went down under the avalanche in double-quick time. The mob had refrained from shooting him, seemingly, for his voice rose above the din as strongly as ever, but Nick and Chick rightly assumed that their last and probably only defender had been overpowered, and was being dragged out of the way.

They had not been idle, however. As soon as they realized how things were heading, they had turned the two cots over on their sides, so that the mattresses were together, and the legs pointing in opposite directions. They had then shoved this improvised breastworks back almost to the farther wall of the cell, a distance of perhaps eight or ten feet from the door.

They had reason to believe that the two thicknesses of mattresses, together with the covers, pillows, and woven-wire springs, would stop any ordinary bullet, if the necessity arose for fighting from behind. From behind this hastily arranged protection they felt that they could at least give a good account of themselves, and might teach the would-be lynchers such a lesson that the attempt would be given up.

The corridor outside their cell would doubtless quickly fill with men, all of them arsenals, and unfortunately not merely the door, but the whole front of the cell was an open steel grating. Therefore, everybody who could get within range would have the pleasure of peppering at them at will, and their answering fire would be attended by great risk to themselves if they dared show even one eye, in order to aim. But that could not be helped, and at any rate, they had the satisfaction of knowing that three sides of the wall were of heavy two-inch oak timbers without a break anywhere, for it was an interior room without windows, the only ventilation being obtained from the corridor. That meant that they would have enemies on only one side of them, and, until their ammunition gave out, they felt confident that they could keep the mob from actually entering the cell.

The two weapons which the sheriff had given them were in perfect order, and each contained six cartridges. Those were all they had, however—just twelve shots between them, and a fate, that they did not care to dwell upon.

From behind their rude breastworks they heard the main door of the jail groan and chatter under the blows of axes, and presently knew that it had given way. The exultant cries which greeted this success came to them through the now open doorway with startling distinctness, and a moment later the floor of the corridor creaked under the thud of many heavily shod feet.

The cell was dark, but the corridor had been dimly lighted by a kerosene lamp, which was suspended from the ceiling. Now, the crouching detectives saw flickering reflections on the walls about them, evidently cast by lanterns or torches.

Most of the mob paused to peer into the first cells they came to, and then, finding them empty, surged on. It was only a matter of a few seconds, however, before one of the most impetuous threw the rays of a lantern into the detectives' cage and shouted exultantly:

"Here they are, boys! They've turned over their bunks and are skulking behind them!"

The space in front of the cell immediately filled with a crowding, cursing, threatening throng, the members of which, however, were plainly in ignorance of the fact that their intended victims were armed.

Obviously, somebody had thoughtfully gone through the beaten sheriff's pockets, for no sooner was the shout raised for the key of the cell, than a man shouldered through the ranks, crying:

"I've got it! We'll have those Eastern skunks out of there before they know what's happening to them!"

They were counting their chickens before they were hatched, however.

That was the signal for which Nick and Chick had been waiting, one at either end of their strange barricade.

"Let them have it!" whispered Nick, and in a watch

tick two spurts of flame leaped out of the darkness at the back of the cell, and two reports, deafening in their unexpectedness, rent the air.

Under those circumstances the detectives' bullets could not possibly fail to take effect, for they were fired into a closely packed mass of at least twenty men, the rest of the mob, which doubtless numbered many more, having found it impossible to crowd into the space directly in front of the cell.

A groan and a scream, each wrenched out by the agony of a wound, were the immediate responses, but they were at once overwhelmed in a seething clamor of surprise and execration.

The first shock of this unexpected resistance swept the exposed space as clean as a whistle, the wounded men being dragged aside by their fellows. The mob quickly rallied, however, and the more impetuous made another rush, the man with the key at their head. There was a new method in their attack, for most of them advanced in crouching postures, and fired through the lower part of the steel grating, while others spread themselves out behind, and fired at the normal height, taking care, however, not to interfere with the men whose duty it was, if possible, to unlock the door and throw it open in preparation for the desperate rush that they hoped would be the beginning of the end.

Again Nick's signal came to his assistant's ears, and again their weapons spoke almost simultaneously. Under cover of the darkness Nick was able to single out the man with the key, and that unfortunate went down with a bullet through his lungs. Chick, too, brought down his man, and thus the rush was once more stayed.

The two detectives took no pleasure in this sort of slaughter. They would have avoided it if they possibly could, and even now Nick tried his best to remove the stern necessity which faced them.

As the corridor in front of the cell once more cleared, he called out:

"We have plenty more bullets where those came from, boys, and we can put every one of them home. Don't you think you've had about enough? You're making the biggest mistake of your lives. All we ask is a square deal and time to prove who has the right of this. The sheriff has already sent some telegrams that will settle the matter. Aren't you willing to wait for the answers? Do you want to have the murder of Nick and Chick Carter on your consciences, and have good citizens everywhere shudder everytime the name of Bitter River is mentioned? That is what will happen if you keep on with this night's work."

His words caused a difference of opinion, but again Schwartz's paid henchmen, aided by the more reckless and unthinking among their companions, outshouted the rest, and a third attack followed.

It was even more impetuous and bloodthirsty than the others had been, for now revenge had its malignant part in the assault, since one of the mob was already dead, and three others had been more or less severely wounded by the detectives' fire.

A perfect fusillade of shots swept the cell, but without doing much damage to its defenders. Most of the bullets buried themselves in the mattresses, or harmlessly penetrated the thick wooden partition at the back.

For the third time, too, Nick and Chick fired, and two more men dropped. In this instance, however, the mob was too much enraged to retreat, or even to remove its wounded. On the contrary, others crowded into the confined space in front of the cell, and the firing became incessant.

Under the circumstances, the detectives, of course, quickly exhausted their ammunition. They felt it necessary to fire as rapidly as possible, in the hope that the strength of their resistance might still discourage the mob and lead it to withdraw.

But no such result followed. The raiders were too much inflamed for that, and were ready to pay any price if they could get at the hated Easterners, who had fought them so stubbornly and implacably.

There could be only one end to such a struggle. As soon as the detectives' fire ceased a whoop of frenzied delight echoed through the building, and it was caught up by scores of voices outside. The door was speedily unlocked, and the vanguard of the horde swarmed into the cell.

The hottest sort of hand-to-hand encounter took place there, for Nick and his assistant had bounded over their barricade and met the invaders with clubbed weapons.

But it was soon over, as was to be expected. The detectives were crowded from their feet and beaten down by a score of assailants. In spite of their superb resistance, they found themselves bound and helpless in an incredibly short time.

Then, long, new hemp ropes appeared, as if by magic, and nooses were thrown over their heads.

Thus, with their hands bound behind them, gags in their mouths, and hangman's ropes about their necks, they were led in triumph from the jail.

Bitter River's greatest lynching bee was about to take place.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

Day was just beginning to break as the whole mob, its active members evidently numbering close upon a hundred, surrounded Nick and Chick outside the jail, and clamorously headed for the open country, followed by several times that number of stragglers, including men, women, and even children.

There seemed no attempt at concealment on the part of any one. The terrible toll which the detectives' weapons had claimed had worked the crowd up to such a pitch that it dared anything. It was a wonder that it did not string Nick and his assistant up to the nearest electric-light pole.

Evidently some lingering sense of decency of rude fitness still prevailed, though, and the informal execution was to take place outside the town limits.

The outskirts were soon reached, and one of the first telegraph poles met with, after the last house had been passed, was spontaneously chosen for "Judge Lynch's" gallows. A nimble-footed youth, hardly more than a boy, caught up the free ends of the two ropes, swiftly climbed the pole, and threw them over one of the cross trees.

The mob spread out, leaving the doomed men standing in an open space close to the pole. One resourceful individual had hitched his own, or some other man's horse to a light spring wagon, and had followed the crowd. Now the latter made way for him, and the detectives

were seized and thrust into the wagon, being supported until they could get their balance on their feet.

All that remained was to drive the wagon out from under them after the ropes had been made fast above. They had been thoughtfully stood up upon the seat of the wagon, the driver having willingly vacated it and taken his place at the horse's head.

That gave them farther to drop, and held out the pleasing hope that their necks would be broken, or that they would be strangled before the ropes stretched enough to allow their toes to touch the ground.

Clearly it was an idea of the meeting that the condemned should not be given the customary opportunity to indulge in last words. Derisive cries of "speech, speech!" were heard, to be sure, but they were quickly silenced.

"They've had plenty of chance to talk, and one of 'em's been shootin' 'is mouth off altogether too much, already," was the way one of the ringleaders—an employee of Schwartz's, by the way—elegantly put it.

That seemed to express the will of the majority, and, there being no other preliminaries, the signal to start the horse was just about to be given when there was an unlooked-for interruption.

It came in the shape of a cloud of white dust, which approached like a whirlwind, and from which issued the loud reports of a gasoline motor.

The crowd scattered to right and left before the furiously driven car, which was swept some little distance past the telegraph pole before it could be brought to a stop. Then three figures detached themselves from the cloud and approached the motionless wagon. Two of them came with great strides, but the third man, who was between the others, advanced with extreme reluctance. As a matter of fact, he was being dragged by his companions.

Nick and Chick were standing on the seat of the wagon with their faces to the rear, looking toward the town. Thus it was that they could not see the newcomers, and when the automobile had whizzed by them the dust had been too thick to enable them to do so. Most of those in the crowd, however, instantly recognized the three men, and their excited exclamations told Nick and his assistant enough to enable them to guess at the situation.

The new figures were those of the two government agents, with Henry L. Schwartz as a reluctant third.

The German's followers gave a yell of rage as they saw him in this predicament, but the two men from Washington, although apparently unarmed, paid no attention to the menacing looks cast at them. They coolly shouldered their way through the crowd, which parted half curiously, half sullenly.

When they reached the wagon they gave reassuring nods to the detectives, and then turned on the crowd. One of them raised his free hand and commanded silence.

"If we hadn't come just when we did, gentlemen," he began quietly, but in a voice that carried to the farthest stragglers, "you would have committed the greatest crime that any mob in this country ever did—and that is saying a great deal. These men are just what they claim to be—Nick Carter, the most celebrated detective in the United States, and Chick, his best-known assistant. They are here for exactly the reasons they have given you."

"They are in it, too!" shouted somebody. "Give them a dose of the same medicine!"

"Prove it!" cried another in the crowd. "We've had enough hot air!"

"Who are you?" came the demand from another quarter.

The spokesman of the newcomers looked in the direction from which the last voice had come.

"I'll answer that first," he said promptly. "We are special representatives of the department of the interior, sent out to investigate and report the radium situation in this State and in Colorado. Here are my official credentials, which your leader, or leaders, may examine. My friend will also be glad to show you his."

As he spoke, he drew from his pocket and unfolded a paper headed, "Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C.," and bearing the official seal. The other agent did likewise, and the two papers were passed from hand to hand among those nearest.

"Do they satisfy you?" the government agent asked, as soon as he had given several of the ringleaders a chance to see the credentials.

"They look all straight," one of the mob answered. "I guess you fellows are all right; but what have you got to do with these others, and how do you know who they are?"

"I am coming to that," was the reply. "I wanted you men to get us straight first. Neither of us has ever had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Carter or his assistant before, but I have something here that ought instantly to convince any man who isn't a fool or a knave that you were just about to lynch two of the most valuable men in the world."

With that, he took from his pocket a yellow envelope which all recognized. He drew from it a telegram and spread it out.

"I just happened to find this in my pigeonhole at the hotel," he said. "I should have received it last night, but neglected to look for any mail at that time. Why it wasn't delivered to me by the hotel clerk I can't say, but the telegraph operator can testify that it should have reached me many hours ago, judging from the time of its receipt here at Bitter River. Now, gentlemen, this is in cipher. I am going to show it to some of you, but you will be unable to make anything out of it. I shall have to ask you to take my word for it, and I shall expect you to do so. I can't reveal the department's secret code to you, but this is what the message says:

"'MURDOCK, Young's Hotel, Bitter River, Utah: Have just learned Nick Carter and assistant are in Bitter River in connection with Lambert radium robberies. Suggest that you get in touch with them. Carter may be able to give you pointers in your own work. Detectives may be in disguise, but you can probably identify them.

"'(Signed) FORT, Secretary of the Interior.'

"Now do you people want any better evidence than that?" Murdock went on, looking up from the telegram and scanning the upturned faces about him. "Here's the telegram. You can look at it yourselves and see that it's in cipher. I wouldn't expect you to believe my version of it if I hadn't already convinced you of my own position. While you are looking at the telegram I will tell you the rest. It won't take more than a few moments. Some of you know that we tried our best to stop this thing long ago. We knew at the time that these men claimed to be detectives, but we did not suspect who they

were, and therefore we did not go as far as we otherwise would. It did look rather bad for them, and we were by no means sure that they had not attempted to rob Schwartz's plant. Still, we tried to induce you to go slow, but you wouldn't listen to us, and we were hopelessly outnumbered.

"Later, we heard rumors of Mr. Carter's claims, and we were in the hotel when their rooms were searched by the sheriff. We heard that nothing was found to support their contention, but afterward we remembered having seen a man sneak out of their rooms some time before the sheriff's arrival. It suddenly came to us that that man might have removed the evidence which the sheriff failed to find. The fellow is probably here in the crowd now."

Murdock's eyes swept over the mob, and presently his face lighted up triumphantly. He pointed to a hard-featured individual, who was evidently trying to make himself as inconspicuous as he could.

"That's the man!" he called out loudly. "If you search him you may find the missing proofs of these gentlemen's identity."

All eyes turned to the man indicated, who proved to be Grimes, the foreman at the so-called radium plant. He was seized by a dozen hands at once, and his clothing was searched, despite his frantic resistance. As a result, there came to light a bundle of the detectives' papers, letters, and cards.

That finally settled the matter, so far as Nick and his assistant were concerned. They were quickly released, and lost no time in thanking their rescuers. The latter cut their thanks short, however, and Murdock again turned to the crowd.

"As for this fellow," he shouted, clapping Schwartz roughly on the shoulder, "we caught him flagging a train a while ago and trying to sneak out of town. You can draw your own conclusions from that, and I am going to turn him over to Mr. Carter here, who will doubtless be glad to tell you what evidence he has against him."

Nick did so, and the fickle mob, having transferred its sympathies completely, made a rush for the thoroughly cowed German, and manifested an earnest desire to string him up instead of the detectives.

The latter and the two government agents nipped that in the bud, however, and hurried Schwartz and Grimes to jail in the auto which Murdock had "borrowed." The rest of the German's hirelings were allowed their freedom, but warned to leave town within twenty-four hours.

Four grams of radium were found hidden in a short length of lead pipe at the bottom of Schwartz's trunk at the hotel. These, together with the one gram possessed by the People's Radium Institute, in New York, made up the total amount stolen from the Lambert Company, all of which was soon turned over to the latter.

The trials of Schwartz, his son, and Jumpy Riley, the New York gangster, who had been hired to commit the first robbery, were held within a short time. The chief criminals all received unusually heavy sentences, and those of their various subordinates who had also been caught in the net are now serving shorter terms.

Matthew Lambert offered Nick Carter a princely fee for his services, but the great detective refused to touch a cent above his expenses. He had been very much impressed by the work being done at the People's Radium Institute, and urged that the Lambert Company, instead of paying him, should take over the institute, retain Doctor Kimball in charge of it, give it another name, and endow it with a sufficient quantity of radium to meet all reasonable needs, with special reference to the necessities of the poorer cancer sufferers.

The company readily agreed to this unselfish proposition, and Nick now has the satisfaction of knowing that the noble work being done by the Lambert Radium Institute owes its existence primarily to him.

THE END.

"The Blind Man's Daughter; or, Nick Carter's Strange Clew," is the title of the story that you will find in the next issue of this weekly, No. 91, out June 6th. The story is one of unusual interest, so do not fail to read it.

The Syndicate of Crime.

Or, King Nelson's Puzzling Quest.

By HARRIE IRVING HANCOCK.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Luke Strull, a fisher of the tide of New York harbor, and his beautiful daughter Blanche, while out seeking whatever they can pick up from the water, find the body of a beautiful girl, who has presumably been choked and thrown overboard from some harbor craft. Blanche insists that the body be removed to their home on the water front, and the proper authorities notified. Upon arriving at the house Blanche notices the eyelids of the unknown girl flutter. Immediately she sets about to resuscitate her.

Blanche is a beautiful girl, and she has fitted herself for a higher station in life. Many of the young longshoremen had proposed to her, but she has rejected them all. She loves Phillip Darrell, a wealthy young man.

While Blanche is working over the unconscious girl, Darrell enters the house. He has studied medicine, and sets about to bring the unknown stranger back to consciousness. He notices a blue line about the girl's throat.

He decides to call Allan King Nelson, a detective, into the case. While Phillip and Blanche are discussing the question of notifying the detective, Nelson announces himself. To his trained eye two things are clear: the girl has been choked and thrown overboard from a boat that is painted green and white; also, that she struggled with a man attired in the clothing of a gentleman. Phil becomes interested and pledges to aid the detective in his search.

Nelson and Darrell motor to Fort Nelson, and then go to McTrawley's saloon on the water front in search of Ike Crawford. Nelson finds his man in the saloon, a fight ensues, and Crawford escapes. A clew from a newspaper clipping leads the detective and his assistant to Dracut, N. J., where, through the aid of a minister, they discover that the mysterious girl is Miss Elsie Rockwell, the adopted daughter of Doctor Simon Rockwell.

CHAPTER VII.

PURE AS THE ANGELS.

The depot carriage was waiting at the gate. King Nelson gave the necessary order, with the result that two or three minutes later the conveyance turned into the driveway of the well-kept grounds of Doctor Rockwell.

Some two acres in extent were these grounds, mostly laid out in lawn, with many shade trees. The house was handsome, with a stable to match. The general impression was that of a home of a man of more than ordinary means and taste.

Both men alighted from the carriage. King Nelson rang the doorbell. A smart-looking young maid answered the summons.

"I would like to see the doctor, if you please," said the detective.

"He's not at home."

"But will be very soon, I hope?"

"I don't know when he'll be at home, sir."

"Out on professional calls?"

The maid hesitated, noting which King Nelson added quickly:

"My business with him is immediate and of utmost importance."

A look half of understanding came into the maid's eyes.

"Perhaps you'd better come in and see Miss Boston, the housekeeper," proposed the maid.

King Nelson at once accepted the suggestion. Accompanied by Phil, he was shown into the parlor.

"This is Miss Boston," said the maid, reëntering the parlor two minutes later. She was followed by a tottering, infirm woman of seventy, dressed in severe black, with a lace cap surmounting her carefully brushed snow-white hair. The most noticable thing about the housekeeper was the possession of a pair of wonderfully keen black eyes, that instantly began to search the faces of her callers.

King Nelson started to explain the object of his visit, in much the same words he had used with the clergyman.

"You'll have to speak louder," interrupted Miss Boston, in a shrill voice. "Rose Darm, tell the gentleman that I'm very deaf."

So King Nelson began again. It was necessary almost to shout before he could make himself understood.

"I wish you could tell me where the doctor is," responded Miss Boston, in a voice full of anxiety. "He went away at nine o'clock last night, and ain't been back since, a thing that ain't happened before in ten years."

King Nelson suggested that he would like to see Miss Elsie.

"She ain't here, either," responded Miss Boston. "That's the strangest thing of all. She went out yesterday afternoon, and ain't back!"

"Did she say where she was going?"

"Not a word. I thought it was for a walk."

"And the doctor, you say, went out at nine o'clock in the evening. You think their absence decidedly strange?"

"I—I don't know what to think," faltered Miss Boston.

Phil noted that the maid, who had been addressed as Rose Darm, remained in the room, a curious listener.

"I venture to hope that everything is all right," hinted King Nelson, with ready sympathy. "By the way, have you a photograph of Miss Elsie that you could show me?"

Miss Boston pursed up her lips, hesitated a moment, then walked to a table, picked up an album, opened it, and brought it to the detective.

He glanced at the face pictured there, asked some questions about the color of Miss Rockwell's hair and eyes, next passed the album to Phil, remarking:

"The young lady seems to answer perfectly the description furnished by my client."

Phil gazed at the picture with a thrill of joy. Assuredly they were on the right track. There was a roguish smile on the lovely pictured face, the eyes were animated with life and happiness, but there could not be a doubt in his mind that Miss Rockwell and beautiful Miss Mystery were one and the same. Love's intuition gave him vision as clear as the detective's.

"Yes," answered Darrell huskily, striving to conceal his emotion as he handed the album back. "Beyond a doubt it is she."

"I suppose there is also a picture of the doctor here?" suggested Nelson, turning over the pages. "Ah! This must be he."

"Yes, that's him," nodded Miss Boston.

"Did you say he was coming?" demanded the detective, looking up so quickly that both women glanced for a moment toward the door.

"No, I said it was his photograph," returned Miss Boston, with a snap of displeasure in her voice.

"Thank you, very much, for your kindness," replied Nelson, handing back the closed album and rising. "Miss Boston, if you won't think me too intrusive, allow me to suggest that, as a lawyer, I have had some experience in cases of disappearances and mysterious absences. Now, if you would show me into the doctor's study or workroom, perhaps I may find there some clew that would set your mind at ease, or at least explain his absence to you."

Miss Boston hesitated, but for a moment only. The sham lawyer's deferential manner had won upon her. She led the way to the library.

It was a comfortable, even luxurious, room, the workroom of a student and bookworm, but everything was in perfect order. A glance or two told King Nelson that he could learn nothing there, since he instinctively knew that Miss Boston would resent any suggestion of forcing the desk open.

"When the doctor went out last evening," pursued the detective, "did he show any signs of unusual excitement?"

With considerable prompting, the aged housekeeper stated that Doctor Rockwell had returned to the house at six for his supper; had waited a half hour for Miss Elsie, who had failed to come; then ate his supper, and, finally, becoming uneasy, had gone upstairs to the girl's room. He had come down again soon after, looking white and haggard, and had then left the house without a word. That was all Miss Boston knew.

"If I am not asking too much," suggested the detective, "suppose you show me Miss Rockwell's room. I am anxious to help you, if possible."

Miss Boston led the way upstairs, the maid keeping close to her. The detective went into the girl's room with the women. Phil remained outside. He could not enter those precincts, sacred to him.

But in a moment King Nelson got near enough to the door to catch the young man's eye. That glance plainly said:

"I want to get these women out!"

"I'll wait for you downstairs, Mr. Markham," said Phil, starting down.

An instant later there was a stumble, a loud bumping, a howl, and the sham clerk went headforemost to the bottom of the stairway. He lay there groaning. The maid came flying down the stairs, followed more slowly by Miss Boston.

Both were anxious, curious, questioning as rapidly as they could talk. Phil, groaning heavily, gave vague replies, and did not rise until he saw King Nelson coming down the stairs.

Then, with apparent difficulty, the sham clerk arose, limped, assured his employer that he was not badly hurt, and the pair took their leave, the pretended lawyer promising to come again as soon as possible.

In the carriage it was impossible to talk before the driver. At the depot, however, King Nelson led his young protégé to the deserted end of the platform, murmuring:

"Darrell, my boy, you did that fall splendidly. It enabled me to get just what I wanted. But, first of all, I have the doctor's photo in my pocket. It is possible we are going to need it. If the doctor fails to return home in a day or so, I shall begin to think it possible that the same scoundrels who tried to murder the girl are interested in the old man's death. I shall send a man out here, very likely, who will remain longer and learn some details I didn't think it wise to ask for."

Leaving Phil standing there, King Nelson disappeared inside the depot for a little while. When he came out, he immediately rejoined Darrell.

"It struck me, my boy, that if the doctor had any reason to guess where his adopted daughter had gone, he would follow her at once. Well, he went to New York on the nine-forty-five train last night. Now, as to what I found in the girl's room. There was a crumpled bit of paper in the fireplace. What was more likely than that Miss Elsie would leave some note explaining her departure? Also, what more likely than that the doctor, if anguish-stricken by the news, would crumple up the hateful sheet, throw it from him, and fly from the room? I wanted that ball of paper. I couldn't look at it before the women, for then they would have to see it, too. Your artistic way of falling downstairs put the coveted thing in my possession. Now, Darrell, you appeal to me so strongly as a man that I am going to risk offering you a piece of advice."

"What is it?" asked Phil, struck by the oddity of the other's tone.

"Don't fall too deeply in love with Miss Rockwell until you know a little more about her. Here is the note."

Phil took the crumpled paper and scanned it. It read:

"My More Than Father: If you are grieved by my absence, I am more than heartbroken at the necessity for it. I may be back soon. It depends on whether I can return to you without shame. Elsie."

Phil's troubled eyes sought the detective's. Then the young man, flushing hot with unshaken loyalty, exclaimed:

"If you construe this note into anything unfavorable to Miss Rockwell's character, it's a monstrous lie! She's as pure as the angels!"

CHAPTER VIII.

EVEN UNTO DEATH.

It all seemed like a dream to Blanche, after her visitors had gone. She made the bed up tidily again, cleaned up the room, and then seated herself to think.

How soon would her father be home? She dreaded, more than any one would have guessed, the return of that avaricious old river fisher. She feared the torrent of questions he was likely to pour out upon her. Above all, at all hazards, she must refrain from giving him an answer that would afford Luke Strull any inkling of what had really taken place in his absence.

"This ought to satisfy him," she muttered, drawing from the bosom of her dress a roll of fifty dollars that King Nelson had handed her, with explicit directions of how she was to account for the money. "Ought to, but it won't!"

Blanche shuddered as she thought of her life with this repulsive, unscrupulous, covetous old man. How much longer was it to last?

Yet, with a strong sense of duty as a daughter, she strove to cast off this loathing of Luke Strull.

"If only he would be content with what he picks up from the river!" she thought. "Surely that which is floating out to sea on the water may belong to whomever finds it. But—but——"

For Luke, as the years went by, had grown more and more dissatisfied over the idea of subsisting by the profits of flotsam and jetsam alone.

Two or three times, to her knowledge, he had committed petty water-front thefts; always with consummate cunning, for ordinarily the old man's cowardice of the law was great.

There had of late been before the eyes of Blanche's horrified mental vision, the certainty that her father needed only opportunity—reasonably safe opportunity—to become an actual criminal.

That morning's awful events had opened her eyes even wider. Luke's indifference to the life of the unknown girl they had rescued; his perfect willingness to throw the unfortunate one back into the water, there to die the death she had so narrowly escaped, and all in order that he, Luke Strull, might profit by the few dollars and little package of glistening gems.

Even Blanche's strong nature was crushed at the recollection of that awful, humiliating scene. She threw herself across the bed sobbing.

"I must leave here, go away from him," she thought, as she became calmer. "Not even duty has a right to chain me to such a—such a——"

A shuffling, stamping step out on the wharf brought her to her feet, drying her eyes.

The outer door opened, and Luke entered the junk room. He caught sight of Blanche standing in her doorway.

"Well?" he demanded gruffly, "how's the girl?"

He trod closer to his daughter, peering past her into the room.

"Not gone?" he demanded, seizing Blanche roughly by the arm.

"Yes, father, gone."

"How long ago?"

"A half an hour."

"She recovered then?"

"Enough to go away in—in a cab."

"A cab?" Luke repeated curiously. "Who went for it?"

"A man who was passing by."

"Who was the girl?" demanded Luke, his narrow, ferretlike eyes distrustfully searching his daughter's face.

"I don't know, father," said Blanche quietly.

"Don't know, eh?" roared Luke brutally. "Girl, you're a fool! Didn't you ask her?"

"No."

"Oh, you didn't?" asked her father mockingly. "You thought we had nothing better to do than haul shady hussies out of the river, bring them back to life, and send them on their way happy? You gave her back her jewels, too, of course?"

"Yes."

"You did?" fairly screamed Luke, his eyes blazing, his seamy face taking on the purple hue of apoplexy. He seized his daughter by both arms now, shaking her and glaring venomously into her eyes. "Gave her back her pocketbook, too, I suppose?"

Silently, with bosom heaving, Blanche freed herself after a short, sharp struggle, retreating into her room.

Luke followed her, the devil aroused in him.

"She left this for you, father, as your reward," said Blanche, quickly drawing out the bank notes, and handing them to him with cold scorn. "Take the money, and be glad that you didn't have to commit a crime to get it."

With a cry like that of a panther pouncing on its prey, he snatched the bills, counting them.

For a few moments the old man's eyes glinted with joy. Blanche, watching him, began to hope that he was going to be satisfied. Vain hope! Avarice is never content.

"You're a precious fool!" he cried angrily. "Such a stunner as that girl—fine clothes, money, and diamonds—could have paid you twenty times as much. And you didn't even ask her who she was and where she lived?"

"No."

"You've thrown away a thousand dollars at least, you jade," quivered her father, still keeping his hateful gaze on her face. "No matter! I'll find that girl again, if it takes me months. And I'll make her pay handsome, too!"

Suddenly a new suspicion flashed across the river fisher's mind. Trusting no one—not even himself—he thought he saw through it all.

Striding across the room, he seized Blanche once more by the wrist.

"Girl," he choked, "look at me! Look me straight in the eye!"

Blanche met his gaze without a quiver.

"You've been lying to me!" he raged.

No answer.

"Tell me who's been here while I've been away."

Her eyes met his still calmly, her lips moved not.

"Ain't I your father?"

"God pity me—yes!"

"Then do your duty like a daughter. Answer my question. Tell me the truth."

"I shall tell you nothing more than I have done."

"Your duty!"

"Father," came from the girl, in a tone of cold anguish, "from this moment I owe you none—shall yield you none."

Amazement and rage were blended in the cry that Luke Strull uttered as he released her wrist with a flinging gesture.

Blanche took instant advantage of her liberty to walk to where her hat lay. Placing it upon her head, she started deliberately toward the door. Luke watched her, cunning now taking somewhat the place of rage in his look.

"Where are you going?"

"It matters not to you, father. I am not coming back."

Swiftly as a panther, stealthily as one, Luke snatched up a pillow from the bed. On tiptoe he bounded after her.

Blanche, if she heard him, disdained to turn.

Just beyond the doorway, Luke sprang upon her, bearing her to the floor of the junk room. His arms, muscular despite his age, strove resolutely now for the victory.

Blanche struggled, too. She opened her mouth to scream for help, but the pillow, held savagely against her face, stifled utterance.

Blanche was strong, even though this brute of a father was a shade the stronger. Had she been tackled fairly, she might have escaped. But Luke held all the advantage, and was besides in deadly earnest. The veins of his neck and forehead stood out in knots, his face became deeply purple with the combined violence of his passion and his struggle. Alternately choking her, and smothering her with the pillow, Luke watched her throbbing struggles as they grew fainter and fainter, and then all but ceased. He whipped a cord out of one of his pockets and tried to bind her hands. Thereupon there was another short struggle; the old man triumphed. Still holding her face embedded in the pillow, he used his knife to slash away the cloth of one of her sleeves. With this he sufficiently gagged her, next rolling her over on her back so that her eyes met his.

"Thought you bossed here, eh, girl?" harshly demanded Luke, mopping his brow as he sat, panting, back upon the floor to watch her. "Going to leave, were you? Going off to that girl's house, to be well fixed for life? Going to shake your old father, and turn the whole trick yourself?"

There was a terrible earnestness in his hoarse old voice, as he went fiercely on:

"Girl, you're going to mind me after this—you've got just one chance—or you'll go floating out to sea on the tide, as many another woman has done! You know just what I mean!"

Leering with diabolical cruelty, Luke brought from a shelf a honing stone and strap. Seating himself beside prostrate Blanche, he commenced honing his knife. After a few moments of this work, he got up, went to a cupboard, the key of which he drew from his pocket, secured a bottle of whisky, took a drink, came back and resumed his seat upon the floor with the bottle beside him.

"Slick! slack! slick! slack! moved the knife over the stone. Occasionally Luke ceased the operation to feel the blade's edge with his thumb. A drink, and he went on with the honing.

Blanche, watching the old man's moves, became white with terror, despite herself. She knew old Luke well—ordinarily crafty enough to let liquor alone, but when filled with it, a crazy, cruel, utterly reckless fiend.

"This ain't no fancy bit of show, girl!" he growled, suspending his work long enough to impress his point upon her. "Either you're going to tell me the truth, and swear to it on your mother's Bible, that I've been fool enough to let you keep, or I'm going to cut your throat and turn you adrift on the tide to-night!"

Blanche turned a shade more pallid, though her eyes bravely met the old man's. Slick! slack! slick! slack! The knife's edge became so keen that he was able to cut a hair with it. He took so long a drink of the fiery spirit that it set him coughing and choking for a while. Then he knelt over her, holding the keen steel before her eyes.

"Say that you'll tell me the whole truth and swear to it,

girl," he commanded. "Open and shut your eyes three times, and I'll take out the gag and give you a chance for your life."

Pallid, quivering, looking up into that murderous face, Blanche knew that he was in deadly earnest. The whisky had made him brave.

"Phil asked me to keep it a secret," she mused. "Phil has been the only friend I ever had—the only one who has made life sweet and worth living! For his sake——"

At Blanche's age, no matter how dreary life is, it promises to be better. It is too precious to part with.

"Do you choose to die?" asked the fiend hoarsely.

Blanche's wide-open eyes gazed at his. With an ugly oath, Luke held the knife over her throat.

"No, no—not here!" he muttered, pausing. "There would be blood spots. The cursed police would find them."

Rising, he found a piece of rope with which to fasten the girl's feet. He did not dare look at her face now, but, lifting her, carried her to the trapdoor, lowered her, placed her in his boat, spreading the old canvas over her with artful carelessness.

Out into the North River, teeming with marine life, the water surging with the swash of hundreds of craft, the air dinning with steam whistles all the way from the piping treble to deep bass—out into this highway of commerce and pleasure and passion Blanche was borne. She knew where he was taking her, or could guess. To a lonesome, solitary haunt of his, a cave at the base of almost the first of the Palisades, a cave the entrance of which was so well concealed from the river that flowed into it that few rivermen knew of its existence.

It was a long trip. Blanche struggled frequently to free herself, but in vain. Luke paused in his rowing from time to time. She knew from the gurgling sound which followed that he had brought his bottle.

At last the boat's keel grated. Luke lifted the canvas. They were in the darkened interior of the cave. Without a word he lifted her out of the boat, laying her upon the rocky bottom of the cave some feet from the water's edge. Examining the cords and finding them secure, he grunted and went away. Blanche felt sure he had taken the whisky with him.

Daylight faded and passed. To Blanche the flight of time seemed like the passage of ages. She passed the time in a dull torpor of terror, losing track of the hours.

A light, slightly wavering, came into the cave. With it came Luke Strull. He set the lantern down upon the ground, stood unsteadily over her, looking ten times more fiendish than the girl had ever seen him before.

With a growl he threw himself upon his knees beside her, the knife in his hand.

"See here," he snarled, holding his bloodshot eyes close to hers, "I'm going to give you one more chance—just one. Girl, I'm mad, drunk—crazy with drink! If you thwart me now, every drop of blood in your body will flow. Answer me—is it life or death for you?"

Though Blanche's mind was palsied with terror, the one thought ran through her brain:

"Even death for Phil's sake!"

"Your answer, I tell you!"

Gathering all her strength, Blanche shook her head twice.

With the cry of a destroying wild beast, Luke Strull threw himself upon her.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CANNIBAL.

Following on the heels of the detective, Phil Darrell trod the thickly carpeted halls of Fort Nelson.

"Whenever man may, it is well for him to rest," laughed the king. "Come into my room, Darrell; we will try to get a five minutes' siesta between moves."

He threw open a door, standing courteously aside for his guest to enter first, and Darrell found himself in the sanctum of the greatest detective in the world.

It was an odd apartment, as might have been expected. In the first place, there were no windows in the room. Incandescent lights and artificial ventilation took their place.

"This is practically a sound-proof room," said King Nelson. "Though the whole fire department were to go by in the street at full clangor, you would hear barely a sound here. But help yourself to a seat, my boy. There is no ceremony here."

There were chairs enough in the big room, a dozen or more, almost marvels of the upholsterer's art, and representing all types of lazy luxury. In one corner stood a couch bed; in another corner was a telephone closet. Near the center of the room was a huge, flat-top desk, equipped with a row of electric-bell buttons. On a side table were boxes of cigars and jars of tobacco; over it a rack of pipes. Along the walls were well-filled bookcases, interspersed here and there with cases containing curious weapons, burglars' tools, curious types of handcuffs, and, altogether, more exhibits in criminology than a guest could inventory in one short visit.

"Help yourself to a pipe or cigar," urged King Nelson, as he seated himself at the desk and pressed one of the buttons.

Phil chose a pipe. While he was filling it with tobacco, the door opened. A young man with the face of a sphinx glided to the desk, deposited there a set of papers, and again disappeared.

Phil lighted his pipe, watching the rings of smoke curl upward toward the ceiling. King Nelson rapidly scanned the papers, marking most of them in pencil. Then, writing on a fresh piece of paper, he placed the photograph of Doctor Rockwell on it. In answer to bell summons, the young man came in again, took the bundle of memoranda in silence, and once more vanished.

King Nelson was at leisure.

"Well, Darrell, my boy," he remarked cheerfully, "we are coming on. I'm dispatching one of my operators with the photograph of Doctor Rockwell, to see if he can locate that important personage in New York. A second young man I've dispatched to Dracut to keep track of what goes on at the doctor's home. That may be all we can do tonight. Why don't you take a nap, my boy?"

"I'm not drowsy yet," responded Phil, sending more smoke ceilingward.

"Then you've the most important lesson in life to learn, which is to take care of your reserve force. If you'll pardon me, I'm going to take a half an hour's nap. If you've nothing better to do, will you kindly wake me up at the end of that time?"

Adjusting the back of a reclining chair at the proper angle, King Nelson disposed himself to rest.

Almost instantly he was asleep. Phil, assiduously smoking, sat watching the clock.

Twelve minutes had passed when a tinkling sounded in the telephone closet. Instantly King Nelson was on his feet. Entering the closet, he closed the door after him.

"That's as much of my nap as I'll get at present," he observed smilingly, as he came out. "I've just had a word from Davis. Ike Crawford is in the same café in East Houston Street. He has been drinking moderately all the time, has had supper, and has now reached the meditative stage. When Ike gets to thinking—planning—in earnest, I want to watch him myself. Besides, he may have an important meeting on hand there with some one.

"You're going out, then?"

"At once. Davis needs a relief, and I want to watch Ike."

Phil rose, laying down the pipe.

"No, no, my boy, you're to stay home. Look in on your patient once more, then turn in on my couch for the night."

A few minutes later, after a brief visit to his make-up room, King Nelson left the house. Though he did not now resemble Detective Sergeant Macullam, his disguise was so arranged that the throwing off of a few details would enable him to quickly impersonate that officer at need.

A half an hour later the detective entered one of the typical resorts of the lower East Side. It was known as a Hungarian café, though its proprietor was a German; his wife, who served as cashier, was a Swiss.

On the ground floor was the barroom feature of the café. Here there were seats around small tables for at least a hundred and fifty people. Waiters flew busily to and fro, distributing light refreshments, bottles and half bottles of heavy, old-country wines. At the lower end an orchestra of supposed Hungarians played with vim and considerable harmony. At this hour the café was well filled with men and some women of divers nationalities of the lower East Side. Over the scene hovered thick clouds of smoke arising from scores of cigars and pipes.

The orchestra was playing a lively fantasia as King Nelson entered. The murmur of many voices and the tinkling of glasses gave the music a confused accompaniment. Hardly a person turned to see the newcomer enter.

Between the tables, King Nelson threaded his way, apparently unobserving, but in reality noting every face. He saw Ike Crawford, though he devoted barely a fraction of a second to the glimpse he gave that crook.

At a table a little way off sat a solitary reveler. King Nelson took a seat beside this person.

"Any report, Davis?" murmured the great detective.

A short whispered conference took place between the two. Then:

"That is all for to-night, Davis. I will remain and watch him. You will need a good night's sleep. Good-by."

Left by himself, King Nelson ordered a half bottle of the famous Hungarian wine, though an observer would have noticed that he drank none of it.

Ike sat oblivious to the scene around him. He did not glance up at the occasional entrance of a newcomer.

"He isn't waiting for any one," mused the detective. "Just come here to hide and think. Drinking not enough to get drunk, but dangerous all the same. And doing a heap of thinking and planning. Hullo!"

This last exclamation was brought out by Ike's sudden move in rising from the table. He made his way slowly through the throng, halting several times to look about him, as if to see whether any one were following.

But King Nelson was not in sight. He had already disappeared through a side door into a corridor parallel with the café. By the time that Ike reached the street, the detective was on the other side, standing in the shadow of a doorway.

Ike turned east. His shadow followed, keeping on the other side of the street.

Walking slowly, Crawford at last turned up one of the avenues. King Nelson followed, now on the same side of the street.

A swift change had taken place in his appearance. He was again Sergeant Macullam.

Ike disappeared around the corner of an alleyway.

Increasing his gait, the detective speedily reached that corner.

As he did so, Ike stepped out from the shadow, confronting him.

"So you're hot on my trail, George?" demanded the stranger coolly.

"What did you expect, after your performance this morning?" cross-queried King Nelson.

"Going to nab me?"

"Guess, Ike."

Inwardly, King Nelson was resolving to place the strangler under arrest, start with him for headquarters, allow him a chance for escape, and let him get away. This would cause Ike to feel that New York was too hot for him. It might drive him to seek his employer in the case of Miss Rockwell, and that was what the detective wanted.

"I s'pose I might as well go with you," assented Ike reluctantly.

"Just as well," assented Nelson blandly.

"But see here, George, I'd like to have a little talk with you."

"No time like the present, Ike. We're face to face."

"Feel my clothes over," urged Ike, with the air of one asking a favor.

King Nelson coolly complied.

"Satisfied that I ain't got a gun?"

"Yes."

"Nor brass knuckles, nor blackjack?"

"If you have, they're in your hat," replied the detective, removing that article of Ike's apparel, and finding it empty.

"Come inside a minute, George," begged the strangler. "I want to talk with you—it's important."

King Nelson hesitated.

"I've got something to tell you," went on Ike persuasively. "I don't want to say it before witnesses. If you take me down to headquarters, I swear before Heaven I won't tell you a word of it there."

King Nelson gave the fellow his most penetrative look.

"You ain't afraid o' me?" leered Ike.

"No. Lead on!"

With a grunt, Ike turned his back, slouching down the alleyway, King Nelson at his heels.

Reaching the door of a two-story brick house, Ike

paused long enough to draw a key from his pocket and fit it in the lock."

"Come on," he called back, swinging the door open and entering. "It's dark, but there ain't anything to stumble over. We'll have a light in a minute."

King Nelson followed, keeping a sharp lookout ahead, with both hands in readiness to frustrate any sudden attack by the strangler.

Two steps inside, and he regretted his rashness.

From out of the blackness behind him reached two pairs of arms, one seizing his own, the other gripping him by the throat.

In the same twinkling Ike bounded back.

Though King Nelson fought with the ferocity of a tiger, he found himself completely overmatched by three powerful men. He tried to shout, but only one choked-off sound came from him. After a short struggle, his assailants snapped over his wrists the handcuffs they filched from his pockets. Before they let up the crushing pressure on his throat, they had forced a gag into his mouth.

"Bring him straight ahead, boys!" sounded Ike Crawford's gleeful voice.

The other two lifted their captive, bringing him down the long hallway. Ike lighted a lantern, signing to his comrades to drop their human burden on the bare floor of the unfurnished room.

"Now go out," ordered Ike, speaking with the air of a commander. "Guard the alley door. I've got a whole lot to impress upon the mind of this mantrap."

But the detective, reading aright the savage glare in the strangler's eyes as the door closed and left these two alone, murmured to himself:

"Allan Nelson, I guess it's about all up with you at last!"

With the lust of revenge glowing like fire in his eyes, Ike Crawford threw himself forward upon the floor, crouching over the helpless detective.

"I told you I'd finish you, if you didn't let me alone!" cried the victor, snarling like a mad dog.

Superhumanly brave, King Nelson smiled calmly back at him, not changing color, not a muscle quivering.

Enraged by this cool defiance to the utmost degree of savagery, Ike Crawford bent over his victim, sinking his teeth in the detective's throat.

That taste of blood stimulated him, maddened him as he drew off for an instant.

"That's it!" cried the suddenly aroused cannibal, with maniacal fury. "I'll draw the last drop of blood out of your carcass."

A deep-drawn breath—then Ike Crawford threw himself again into the fiendish task, sinking his fangs deep into King Nelson's throat.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE WOLF'S DEN.

The hunger of the wolf—the ferocity of the mad dog—both were reflected in Ike Crawford's face as he threw himself upon the detective.

His teeth cut deep into King Nelson's throat. In his madness, the brute tried to make those sharp ivories meet.

Second thought made him pause.

Unlocking his teeth, wiping his dripping lips on the back of his hand, he rose to his knees, leering down horribly at his victim.

King Nelson's throat was white, as if every drop of blood had been drawn out at his lacerated throat.

The pain was excruciating, yet he displayed no craven sign.

"Serves ye right!" growled the brute, changing his fixed regard from a leer to a glare. "Folks can't meddle with Ike Crawford—not folks that want to live."

King Nelson's burning eyes steadily regarded the wretch.

"'Twon't work, George!" said Ike hoarsely. "Trying to fix me with the evil eye, are ye? I've known folks to try that before."

The brute laughed with ready bravado. Nevertheless, there was something so terrifying in the way King Nelson's eyes could blaze, that Ike felt a shudder pass over him.

"Second round and wind-up!" he announced, as, shunning Nelson's eyes, he bent over once more.

Suddenly there came a heavy blow on the outside door. Had it been the knell of death, Crawford could not have sprung up more quickly. Stifling a cry of alarm, he listened.

Thump! came another heavy blow on the door.

Stealthily as a cat, Ike tiptoed to the door of the room.

Bump! Crash! The outer door was down. Heavy, rapid footsteps sounded in the hallway.

"Where are the whelps I left there?" growled the alert brute between his teeth. "Sneaked! Skipped in the darkness, and left me to have it out alone!"

He stationed himself alongside the wall, close to the door.

As he did so, he slipped one hand inside his flannel shirt, drawing out something wrapped in a handkerchief.

With frantic movements, he unwound the handkerchief, until there stood revealed in his sinewy right hand a narrow knife, with a blade some six inches long, needle-pointed, edge keener than a razor's.

Whack! Bump! Some one was at the room door now, dealing battering-ram blows.

In Ike's eyes evil glinted as he glanced briefly at the knife. He knew how and where to deal a blow that would snuff out the vital spark of life as quickly and surely as a bullet.

Crash! The door was down. A man's head, shoulders, body, legs, showed in the doorway.

With the lightning spring of a tiger, Ike bounded upon him, striking full and unobstructed at the newcomer's side, just over the heart.

Dazed by the unexpected, Crawford sprang back, gazing at his knife, snapped, broken in two like an icicle.

Letting the useless weapon fall to the floor, Ike squared for the attack.

It came—a second too soon for him.

While the man he had tried to stab clinched with him, a second newcomer swiftly grappled with the brute's feet.

Doubly assailed, Ike crashed to the floor in an instant.

There was a short, sharp struggle, a lively interchange of fearful, resounding blows.

Snap! click! There were circles of steel around Ike's wrists. His face had been terribly battered in the melée.

"You lie still, you hound!" ordered the man whom Ike had tried to stab. "And the next time you use a knife, don't try it on a man who wears a shirt of steel mail!"

From discomfited, prostrated Ike his victor ran to King Nelson, who at once recognized in his liberator his own assistant, Davis.

In a twinkling the latter had the gag out of his chief's mouth.

"Your own handcuffs?" asked Davis, looking at the manacles.

"Yes."

"What pocket is the key in?"

King Nelson told him. In a marvelously short space of time Davis had his chief on his feet.

In the second intruder, who stood silently, vigilantly on guard over the vanquished Ike, King saw Phil Darrell.

"That fiend has nearly torn your throat away!" gasped Davis.

"It isn't much—a little court plaster, a day's soreness," responded the great detective, in a voice choked with blood, adding significantly:

"It'll be many a day before Ike Crawford will have the chance again."

"Don't crow!" snorted Ike defiantly. "It may come soonern't you think. If it does, Macullam——"

"Shut up, you beast!" uttered Davis, turning on the fellow.

"Oh, let him talk," suggested King Nelson, while tying a handkerchief over his throat. "He'll need a lot of practice in talking by the time he gets before the judge. Five years for the trick he played me this morning, ten years for chewing me just now, and ten years for trying to stab you. I'll make it my business to see that the judge gives him every year of it, and it comes to just a quarter of a century in the 'pen' for our friend."

Ike growled like a dog whose bone is being stolen.

In a whisper, King Nelson added:

"Davis, when I come back, I'll send you out for something. Don't come back—in here. You'll have twenty minutes to change your disguise and be on the lookout."

Davis nodded.

"Follow Ike until morning."

"I will, chief."

"Come with me," said Nelson, turning to Phil Darrell, and led him from the room, while Davis, with drawn pistol, mounted guard like a bulldog.

They only went as far as the outer door.

"Light a match," requested the detective, "and look at my throat."

"Some nasty marks," reported Phil, in an undertone.

"Nothing dangerous, eh?"

"Not so dangerous as painful. Jove, how close the villain came to your jugular, though."

With a handkerchief, Phil wiped away the blood, using a caustic pencil to sear and close the flesh, and next applying court plaster. Over this, King Nelson wrapped a muffler.

"I feel as if I'd live until morning," he observed, with a quiet smile. "It was rather a close squeak, though. But how did you two come to my rescue?"

"Can't speak for the other man," responded Phil, in a low whisper. "I suppose he was following you, though I didn't see him until just before we got here. But I disobeyed you—followed you on my own hook from the house, to see if you'd know I was following you."

"I didn't know it. You're learning fast, Darrell."

"Davis and I met at the head of the alleyway. I knew him, and whispered 'King Nelson.' We saw two men open the door where you'd gone in, and sneak off in great haste. That settled it that something was wrong. We broke in."

"Darrell," said the detective quietly, "I'm rather glad you disobeyed me this time. But don't feel encouraged to do it again, or we may miss an important move. You'll be in my way on the next trick, so you'd better go back to my house. You know the gatekeeper, and he'll let you in."

"If you don't mind, sir," countered Phil, "I'm going over to Jersey City to see if all is well with Blanche. Luke Strull is an old fiend at times. I'm worried about her."

"Do you really think her in danger?"

"If Luke is suspicious, and thinks the girl has fooled him out of a big reward, there's no knowing what he might do. I can't rest until I know all's right with Blanche. It isn't late, and I'm going over there."

"We owe it to Miss Strull to see that she is safe, for she did us a mighty good turn," said the detective thoughtfully. "See here, Darrell, I'll change my plans and go over with you in a very little while. You go over to Bates' Wharf on the North River. If the watchman says anything to you, whisper 'Nelson.' Wait there until I come for you. Now, scoot!"

Watching Phil glide out of the alley, King Nelson returned to the room in which Davis stood over Ike Crawford.

"My friend," said the detective, "I want you to get a hack, if you can, to take this prisoner to headquarters. I shan't wait more than twenty minutes, though."

With a gesture of understanding, Davis left the room.

King Nelson stood where he could keep a watchful eye on Ike. From time to time he glanced at his watch. When the twenty minutes were up, he gripped the felon under the shoulders, saying roughly:

"Get up!"

With this assistance, Crawford obeyed.

"Now, understand me, Ike. As a matter of professional pride, I'm going to take you to headquarters without any irons on your wrists. That may put the idea of trying to escape into your head. If it does, it'll save the county the cost of trying you. Remember that I stand ready to shoot on one second's notice."

Saying which, the detective removed the handcuffs from his prisoner's wrists.

"Now, march!"

With a low growl, Ike started, King Nelson behind him, until the head of the alley was reached.

Here, on the sidewalk, the detective's watchful eyes beheld three little pieces of paper like the points of a triangle.

It was as if the detective had received a note which read:

"I am watching—following!—Davis."

King Nelson now walked beside his prisoner. They turned into a side street and got within two blocks of Third Avenue, when the detective suddenly halted, turning around.

"Who was that that called me?" he muttered, aloud.

Ike, left to himself for an instant, glanced swiftly around, though without stirring in his tracks. He saw the outer doorway of a flathouse standing just ajar.

"Funny! I'd have sworn I heard some one call me," went on the detective, still looking down the street.

Backward, a step, two, three—more went Ike, softly as a mouse, all the while keeping his eyes on the detective.

An instant later, the garroter was inside the building, softly closing the door.

Almost at the same instant, King Nelson wheeled about.

"Ike—here—where—confound you! Stop, or I'll shoot!"

Around the near-by corner darted the detective, as if in pursuit.

Not until an hour later did Ike come out of the building. Looking cautiously around, he started on.

But he had not escaped the gaze of the watchful Davis, who skillfully followed him.

Barely twenty minutes after the "escape" of Ike Crawford, Phil Darrell, standing at the end of the wharf to which he had been directed, saw a steam launch approaching on the water.

"Phil!" called a quiet voice, as the craft came alongside. "Jump in."

"You?" murmured Phil, springing into the launch. He had recognized the voice of King Nelson, though the rough-looking boatman at the tiller looked not the least like the detective.

"Yes, it's I," nodded the man at the tiller as the craft moved swiftly out into the stream. "We can get there quicker in this boat, and, besides, a spin on the river does me good when my head's too active."

A few minutes later the launch touched near Blanche's home. The two investigators went quickly to the house. All was dark at the windows.

"Wait," whispered the detective, detaining Darrell at the corner of the building. "I will look about."

Phil saw him go to the door, try it, and step in. The young man waited with an eerie dread of bad news to come.

Two minutes passed. King Nelson came out with hurried, noiseless step.

"I fear for the worst, Phil," was the rapidly delivered message. "Signs of a struggle, confusion, a pillow on the floor, imprinted with floor dust in a way that looks like violence. Not a soul about. Trapdoor in the floor up, boat gone."

"Merciful Heaven!" gasped the amazed young man. "Then——"

"I fear," retorted King Nelson, with sudden energy, "that we've now a case of real murder on our hands to punish."

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE USES OF MAPLE.

Though at one time in the early history of the country an average of 6,000 maple trees were destroyed in clearing the ordinary New York or Pennsylvania farm, maple is to-day, according to the department of agriculture in one of its interesting tree bulletins, one of most widely used and valuable native hardwoods. The wood finds place in an enormous number of articles in daily use, from rolling pins to pianos and organs. It is one of the best woods for flooring, and is always a favorite material for the floors of roller-skating rinks and bowling alleys. It leads all other woods as a material for shoe lasts, the demand for which in Massachusetts alone exceeds 13,000,000 board feet annually.

Sugar maple stands near the top of the list of furniture woods in this country. The so-called "bird's-eye" effect, the department explains, is probably due to buds which for some reason cannot force their way through the bark, but which remain just beneath it year after year. The young wood is distributed each succeeding season by the presence of the bud, and grows around it in fantastic forms, which are exposed when the saw cuts through the abnormal growth.

Maple, the bulletin goes on to say, is one of the chief woods used for agricultural implements and farm machinery, being so employed because of its strength and hardness. All kinds of woodenware are made of maple, which holds important rank also in the manufacture of shuttles, spools, and bobbins. It competes with black gum for first place in the manufacture of rollers of many kinds, from those employed in house moving, to the less massive ones used on lawn mowers. Athletic goods, school supplies, brush backs, pulleys, type cases, and crutches are a few of the other articles for which maple is in demand.

Seven species of maple grow in the United States, of which sugar maple, sometimes called hard maple, is the most important. The total cut of maple in the United States annually amount to about 1,150,000,000 feet.

TRAVELING IN RUSSIA.

A friend of mine tells me that in a recent journey through Russia, he made up his mind to travel one stage in a third-class railway carriage. This is how he says he found it:

"The third-class carriage was so densely packed that there was hardly room for me, but, after much scrambling, I secured a seat near the door.

"I shall never forget that journey. It was an awful experience. I felt as if I were being frozen to death and roasted alive alternately. Outside the cars the temperature was thirty-five degrees below zero. Inside, the mercury stood at seventy-seven—a difference of one hundred and twelve degrees Fahrenheit.

"Inside it was so hot that even the muzhiks, who are fond of roasting themselves, showed signs of discomfort. The heat came from a large iron stove, which the attendant kept feeding with birch firewood. As for myself, I was melted; the perspiration poured out of every pore of my skin.

"My unfortunate fellow-travelers gave vent to their feelings in groans or ejaculations.

"Now and then the door was opened by a new arrival, and instantly the carriage would be filled with intense cold air.

"'Hi, you there!' the muzhiks would call out; 'shut the door! You are freezing us to death!'

"A curious phenomenon sometimes occurred on such occasions. The cold gusts which forced themselves in when the door was opened, immediately condensed, and crystallized the vapor, so that we had a miniature shower of snow in the carriage.

"A few of the passengers appeared really to enjoy this alternate freezing and roasting. They crowded about the stove. One, a tall, sturdy soldier, carrying a sword of tremendous size, crept so close to the stove that the escaping gases made him fall down in an unconscious state, from which he was aroused with difficulty. He was wearing his military overcoat.

"At the first stoppage I bought a new ticket, and went into a second-class carriage."

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Tame Bear Frightens Women Shoppers.

If it had been a mouse it could have created no more terror. It was a real live bear, and after breaking away from its keeper it ran into a store on Main Street, at Keokuk, Iowa. The store is exclusively for women. Amid a chorus of screams the shoppers scrambled for counters, chairs, and other high places. Their flight served only to increase the bear's fright and had it not been for a dog that engaged its attention the big beast would probably have climbed up also, in its efforts to find safety.

The bear was a trained one and had been in an act at a vaudeville theater. The trainer was exhibiting his prize on the street when a dog of playful disposition took a nip at Bruin, with the result that the bear broke away. When the breathless owner arrived at the store he ended the panic. As soon as he was able to talk he explained that the bear would not harm any one and the women were permitted to get down from the counters.

Desperate Fight With Dog.

Armed with no weapons other than those nature gave him, a man battled an immense mastiff dog on the prairie near Muskogee, Okla. When the battle was over both lay on the ground, the dog was dead and the man exhausted. The strength and cunning of the man had triumphed over the strength of the brute.

Clay Sypert, an insurance man, followed his daily custom and took a walk into the country. He was accompanied by his dog, Pete. As Sypert turned and started back to town the dog suddenly sprang at him from the rear, knocking him down. Sypert weighs 152 pounds. When the dog was weighed about a week before the scales stood at 155. Rearing on its hind legs, the mastiff made a lunge for the man's throat. Sypert dodged and swung his right fist into the dog's belly. He pinned the beast to the ground and clutched it about the throat with his hands. Slowly the dog quieted and then lay still. Sypert released his hold. The animal was not dead. The minute it was freed it sprang at the man. The battle was on again. For half an hour they struggled. Once the mastiff sank its teeth into Sypert's shoulder. The two rolled about the ground like wrestlers. When the man shook the dog free a great piece of his flesh was in the brute's mouth.

At last Sypert succeeded in forcing his left hand between the dog's teeth, clutching the lower jaw tightly. With the right hand he seized the beast's windpipe. His hand was on the windpipe when a farmer found them about an hour later. Sypert was covered with blood and his clothing was torn into shreds. The dog was dead. Doctors say that a rabid dog seldom fights as this one did.

Egg Substitute Barred by United States.

"Egg powder" and "egg substitute" have been branded as undesirable by Doctor Carl Alsberg, chief of the government bureau of chemistry, and he has refused permission for manufacturers to put such articles on the market.

Chemical analysis showed that the proposed "substitutes" were only cheap baking powder containing a considerable excess of ground rice as a filler and colored yellow with powered tumoric. They were shown to have no more in common with eggs or genuine powdered eggs than they had with ham sandwiches or strawberry jam.

New Counterfeit $10 Bank Note.

Discovery of a new $10 counterfeit note of the Croker National Bank of San Francisco was announced recently. The counterfeit is of the series of 1902-1908. It is printed from photo-etched plates, and the back is very blotchy. It should not deceive experienced handlers of money. This is a second edition of the counterfeit $10 note on the same bank, the first being issued on October 10, 1911.

Johnny Evers' Boy.

Johnny Evers, erstwhile manager of the Cubs and now backbone of the Braves' infield and the highest-bonused man in baseball, intends to send the name of Evers ringing down the chapters of baseball history. Evers has a young son who knew baseball before he did English, and who, the Little Trojan says, has all the instincts of a major leaguer. Johnny's idea is to train the boy to a baseball career and make him the most polished infielder the game has ever known.

Weds Girl He Wooed by Polar Wireless.

Doctor Douglas Mawson, the antarctic explorer, who has just returned from a trip during which his two companions lost their lives and made his way back to the base after thirty days of suffering in blizzards, was married recently to Miss Delprat, daughter of a mine owner, of Melbourne, Australia.

The couple became engaged in 1911, when Miss Delprat was 19 years of age, before Doctor Mawson started on the last expedition. They exchanged love messages while the doctor was in the antarctic.

The south pole was not Doctor Mawson's goal. He aimed at the exploration of the vast coast of the antarctic which was discovered by the American Captain Wilkes seventy years ago and named after him. The party returned to Adelaide, Australia, on February 27 of this year.

Pour Hot Oil on His Feet.

Two robbers, who poured hot grease on the bare feet of William Lyles, proprietor of a store near Cheneyville, La., in an effort to make him tell the combination of the safe, are being hunted with bloodhounds. They were frightened away after Lyles became unconscious.

He's a Second-story Horse.

A horse weighing about 1,600 pounds broke away from the boy who was leading him recently, at Newark, N. J., and dashed up the front stairway to the second floor of a three-family house at 43 Bridge Street. The horse was being taken to a blacksmith's shop from the sales stables of Miles W. Baney & Bro., at 37 Bridge Street when it took fright at an approaching car.

The animal made for the open door and mounted the narrow stairs to the second floor. Mrs. Mary Thompson saw him coming and ran into a hall room screaming.

Then the horse went to a window and gazed out at the crowd below.

It took half a dozen men to get the horse down an improvised runway.

Baby Swallows "Railway" Car.

Little Paul Dahl, 20 months old, of Chicago, heard his parents talking about a young railroad clerk who swallowed a "safety-first" button, which resulted in an operation for appendicitis. Little Paul didn't think it much of a feat and tried to outdo the clerk by swallowing a toy railroad car, one and one-fourth inches long, one-half inch high, and one-fourth of an inch wide. His mother turned him upside down, but it took a stomach pump and two doctors to recover the car.

Interesting Facts.

An orange tree will sometimes produce 20,000 oranges, while a lemon tree seldom yields more than 2,000 lemons.

The leaf of the Ceylon tallpot palm, which grows to 100 feet in height, is so wide that it will cover twenty men.

Cotton-growing is being tried in the Panama Canal Zone.

Russia's population is increasing at the rate of 2,500,000 a year. It now stands at about 147,000,000, of which 100,000,000 are peasants.

In parts of Switzerland shepherd girls wear men's clothes.

American drills are much used in India for well boring. For deep artesian wells American tools and methods are considered as representing the latest ideals.

Can't Spend $15,000 Deposit.

John Peterson, of Aberdeen, Wash., has hired an attorney to assist him in locating a deposit of $15,000 which he thinks he made in a Seattle bank. Peterson sold property in the latter city, placed the money in a bank, and went to San Francisco, just in time to get caught in the earthquake there. His home was destroyed and his mind became blank from a blow on the head. Since then he has been unable to determine in what bank he placed his $15,000 deposit.

Sleeps Hanging to Pole.

When William P. Weller, a light trimmer in the employ of the Alleghaney County Light Company, of Pittsburgh, was seen hanging to a pole by his belt, it was thought he had been electrocuted. When a policeman climbed the pole on a fire ladder to investigate it was found Walter was only sleeping.

Woodpecker Digs Mate from Trap.

A woodpecker showed remarkable intelligence by saving its mate from death at Highland Lake, near Winsted, Conn. An electric-light wire became imbedded in the bark of a tree and left an incision in which a male bird caught its leg. Its cries brought the mate, which immediately started digging at the tree, and in an hour's time drilled a hole releasing the leg of her mate.

An Astounding Fact.

It is an astounding fact that the annual military budget of ten of the leading powers is nearly $2,000,000,000, a greater sum by far than was ever imposed upon the people at any time in the history of the world, says former Vice President Fairbanks in *Leslie's*. We boast of our advanced civilization and are proud of the evidences of our progress toward higher and better things in countless avenues of activity; we feel that the world is growing better and that the people are coming to a better mutual understanding; yet we are amazed that the great powers have not long ere this come to such an agreement as would render unnecessary the tremendous drain for war purposes. The hope of mankind is that Christian civilization may yet substitute for wasteful and brutal war some enlightened, efficient agency for the peaceful adjusting of differences among nations.

To Finger-print Pictures.

Works of art may soon be Bertilloned in order to prevent counterfeits being made and sold as genuine, according to Professor Bordas, of Paris. He has suggested a scheme whereby artists, in addition to their signatures, should leave the imprint of their fingers on their works. If they do this, he contends, counterfeits will become impossible.

Fifty Thousand Miners of Ohio Quit Work.

Six hundred coal mines in Ohio, employing approximately 50,000 men, have suspended work, to remain closed until miners and operators reach a wage agreement and the constitutionality of the mine-run-basis payment law is tested in the courts.

The tangled mining situation in Ohio, the operators say, is due to the run-of-mine payment system, prescribed in the law recently enacted at the special session of the legislature. Miners demanded a wage scale providing for payment on an absolutely mine-run basis.

"We have done everything in our power to obtain wage contracts, but our offers have all been rejected," said President Walter R. Woodford, of the Eastern Ohio Coal Operators' Association.

Giant Rats Terrorize Town.

Unless a modern "Pied Piper" or some other agency comes to the rescue, Lynchburg, Va., will be compelled to surrender to an army of rats that has invaded it. The rats are unusually large and are in such numbers that the cats apparently fear them and the dogs have learned to keep away from the ferocious little beasts. The Union Station platform is a sort of rendezvous for them.

Whips Two Half-crazed Men.

Although Tommy Tucker is not a large man, he is the hero of Lanning, Iowa, for he whipped two Hungarians, who are in a hospital recovering from the beating they received. Tucker's only injury was a slight cut on his face. The two foreigners, who appeared to be half crazed were armed with daggers and terrified the entire town. When they cursed Tucker, he attacked them, although unarmed.

This Begger Had $97.

A young man wearing a well-cut brown tweed suit walked up to Detective Joseph Matthews, of the mendicant squad, recently at Broadway and Seventy-fourth Street, New York, and asked Matthews to give him money to get to his home in Maine. Matthews repulsed him and saw him approach other persons. He then arrested him. At the West Forty-seventh Street station Matthews searched his prisoner and found $97.55 in his pockets. His cloth-

ing bore the label of a tailor at Fifth Avenue and Thirty-ninth Street.

In the men's night court the prisoner, who said his name was Edward Gniss, declined to tell anything about himself. Magistrate Freschi sent him to the workhouse on Blackwell's Island for thirty days, and put him under $500 bonds to keep the peace for six months. Gniss will have to stay in jail unless he supplies the bond.

Killifer Expelled by Players' Union.

Bill Killifer, the catcher awarded to the Philadelphia National club by the court recently, has fallen into disgrace with his associates of the Baseball Players' Fraternity. President David L. Fultz, of this organization, has announced that the Quaker backstop has been expelled from membership for contract jumping.

Fultz further went on record as saying that like punishment would be meted out to every member who has disregarded contract obligations in the past, or who does so in the future.

"It is not a question of recognizing the Federal League," said Fultz. "This action was taken in conformity to a resolution prohibiting such breaches of contract, which our board of directors passed at the annual meeting last October.

"The fraternity wishes to go on record as absolutely opposed to this practice. It wishes also to rebuke Killifer for his action. But it does not feel that he is half so much to blame as the older and more experienced men who held out the lure and induced him to violate his agreement.

"I am sure," continued Mr. Fultz, "that baseball magnates, both organized and otherwise, should put an end to such practices, instead of upholding one another in cutthroat tactics. They will have to do so or sacrifice public faith in the integrity of the game.

"It seems at the present time as if the fraternity is the only faction in baseball which believes in the integrity of a contract. For this reason I am urging the players to stand by their agreements. It is right that they should do so. Besides, if they do not, and the magnates should decide to bring actions for damages, jumping players might suffer financial loss far in excess of the inducements which led to breach of contract.

"So long as the magnates of organized baseball live up to the agreement which they effected with the fraternity in Cincinnati, our association shall continue to exert every effort to protect them in their contractual rights."

Wild Shamrock Rumor.

Sir Thomas Lipton is still on the Riviera, but his private secretary says there is absolutely no truth in the report that work will be stopped on the Shamrock IV., and the intimation that he may not race. Work is going right on, and nothing within human control can stop the Shamrock from reaching Sandy Hook on the dates for the America's Cup races.

Dieted for His Jail Break.

Although scores of officers and citizens have been hunting Frank G. Holt, alias Frank G. Carroll, the confessed robber of the Union Bank of Holidaysburg, Pa., who escaped from jail recently, no trace of the fugitive has been discovered.

When Holt was locked up he began dieting, it developed. Although he has been behind the bars only a short time, he lost almost twenty pounds, having eaten little. By this he was able to squeeze between the bars, six inches apart, after he had soaped his body.

Third of His Life Spent on a Puzzle.

After fifteen years of hard work on a cube puzzle, N. E. Swanson, of Denver, Col., has finished it. He has spent one-third of his life experimenting with his invention—thirty bits of wood that fit together. Each piece is locked by one or more pieces. To put the puzzle together or take it apart the various locks must work in harmony, and the pieces must fit into each other.

"I believe that I have the most intricate puzzle ever invented," said Swanson, "for to put it together or take it apart one must know the thirty pieces as he knows his alphabet; that is, he must recognize each piece. Then he must know how the locks come, how to press this or that piece so that it will operate upon another.

"I believe that I am safe in saying that there is no man who can take it apart and put it together within twenty-four hours, and very few can work it. It is a puzzle that will puzzle any enthusiast."

And that seems to be enough for Swanson.

$100,000 Offer Wins a Wife.

A marriage out of the ordinary for Pensacola, Fla., was that of Major Charles B. Lewis, a rich resident of Jacksonville, Ill., to Miss Mabel Enyart, an accomplished young woman of Gohen, Ind., who had been visiting a friend at Pensacola for several weeks. The bridegroom is seventy-five years old, and the bride is just rounding eighteen years.

Prior to meeting Miss Enyart, Major Lewis, who is a widower, with a winter home in Pensacola, made it known to a number of young ladies that he would endow any one with $100,000 in her own right if she would marry him, and, moreover, that she should come into possession of all of his property at his death. The major preferred a blonde, and another specification was that she should be between eighteen and twenty years of age.

Collier's Men Save Mates.

Readiness of officers and enlisted men of the navy to risk their lives to save their shipmates is strikingly illustrated in a report to the navy department from the commanding officer of the collier *Jupiter*.

"On March 16, last," the report says, "Ordinary Seamen Curtis, Fitz, and Anding went down in No. 13 hold of the *Jupiter* to coal the galley. About 500 tons of coal were stored in this hold, and poisonous gases had collected.

"Fitz, finding himself getting faint, started to go back up the ladder, but fell unconscious. Anding at once put the hoisting line around Fitz, and Curtis went up for help. Seaman Stanley went below to bring up Fitz, and as soon as the latter had been removed, Anding dropped back unconscious.

"Boatswain's Mate Leitner then went down to put a line around Anding, but found that the latter had fallen so far from the ladder that the line would not reach. He then tried to drag Anding, but was himself overcome and fell back into the hatch. Boatswain W. T. Shaw arrived at this time, went below, and endeavored to drag the unconscious men to the ladder, but found that he could

not move them. Chief Carpenter Kempton and Ordinary Seaman Ferguson then went into the hold to render assistance, and Ordinary Seaman Curtis went back into the hold a second time.

"When the executive officer arrived, he ordered a line thrown into the hold from the coal boom, and Boatswain Shaw placed this around Anding, and he was then hauled out. Shaw then tried to bend the line around Leitner, but was overcome before he could finish his task. Kempton, Curtis, and Ferguson finished it, and Leitner was hoisted out. The three men then started for the ladder, but Kempton and Curtis were overcome and fell back. Ordinary Seamen Sales and Simpson next went to the rescue, and all were hauled to safety."

New Apple Wanted.

One of the most gigantic experiments in apple culture ever undertaken in the Northwest is now well under way at the university at Moscow, Idaho. It is being directed by Professor C. C. Vincent, of the department of horticulture.

The experiment involves the growing of more than 7,000 seedling trees germinated from over 100 different crosses between all of the best-known commercial apples of the Northwest. The purpose of the big undertaking, which is now in its second year, is to discover, if possible, a new variety which will bear only the good qualities claimed by the original varieties from which it is germinated.

Of the hundred different crosses, one is between the Ben Davis and the Jonathan. Through this cross it is sought to produce an apple that will unite the excellent keeping and prolific bearing qualities of the Ben Davis with the superior flavor and color of the Jonathan. The ultimate result of the numerous crossings will be, it is hoped, to originate a variety that will have a greater commercial value, both as a shipper and as a seller, than any variety now on the markets.

It will be several years yet before any practical results can be obtained from the cross breeding, since no seedlings older than two years are now on hand.

Eighteen hundred two-year-old trees are now being removed from the department's nursery to permanent places in the orchard. Another set of 3,500 one-year-old seedlings is being grown in the nursery, and will not be transplanted for another year. In addition to these, 2,000 seedlings are being germinated in the greenhouses, and will not be planted until next year.

After the experiment has been completed, a bulletin, showing the results obtained, will be published.

Snow from Clear Sky in Texas.

Dallas weather drew a limelight position in the climatological report for the State of Texas for February. Special mention was given in the report, over the signature of Howard H. Martin, assistant observer at Dallas, of a snowstorm out of a clear sky that occurred the morning of February 24. The observer drew the inference that the snow was caused by the condensation of an almost imperceptible fog that arose from the river.

Sun Runs Engine of Dead Inventor.

Out in the Arizona desert there is a big, glass-covered mass of machinery which for two years has been drawing its power from the heat of the sun. This is the famous solar engine designed by George Westinghouse, inventor of the railway air brake, who died recently. Many interesting experiments were made with it under the direction of Westinghouse, and yet he regarded the sun-power problem as being only partly solved. The engine in the desert is still in charge of the men he sent there.

Far up on the bleak North Atlantic coast an experimental installation of Westinghouse's tidal motor has been operating for two years. On an inland stream east of Pittsburgh, Pa., the great inventor last summer installed a turbinelike apparatus to collect power from the sluggishly moving current. He intended to develop a principle of securing power from a peaceful, still-running body of water without the necessity of building a huge dam.

Mechanical engineers are wondering what effect the death of Westinghouse will have on the many discoveries "in the making." His laboratories are a marvelous collection of half-completed improvements and attachments and models for motors, engines, turbines, and other power devices. Some of them have been tested in part, others are awaiting the touch of the master hand.

Dancing Masters for Tango.

Forty-five professors of dancing from every country in the world, representing 3,000 dancing masters, have been holding, in Paris, France, the first international congress of directors of the terpsichorean art.

The question of whether or not the tango ought to be banished from their classes has been the most serious matter discussed at the sessions of the congress.

The congress decided that the tango, as danced by M. Schwarz, the teacher of the Paris Opera, combined the spirit of the Argentine original with the refinement which is due to the highest society, and that therefore it is a suitable dance for their pupils.

The tatao, as illustrated by M. Lefort, the president of the congress, was accepted as a type of dance for which there is a vacancy existing.

Four kinds of furlana, the Venetian dance, were illustrated before the congress by Frau von Gasparins, the teacher of the German court at Berlin. All four were accepted.

Parrot's Cries Rout Thieves.

Shrill cries of a parrot, "Hey, bo, what you lookin' for?" proved too much for the nerves of burglars who broke into the home of Fred Connella, at Minneapolis, Minn. They fled before they had completed looting the house.

The Connella family, while away, left the parrot and watchdog at home. Mrs. C. Fogarty lives in the other half of the double house, the partition wall of which is thin. She heard the parrot screech. When the Connellas returned, investigation proved the burglars had carried the watchdog to a shed and locked him in. They had ransacked two rooms before being frightened away by the parrot.

Mail Truck Overboard.

An automobile mail truck bound from the New York post office to deliver mail to the railway post office at the Central Railroad of New Jersey terminal at Communipaw, went overboard from the ferryboat *Bound Brook* at three o'clock one morning recently. The truck stood at the front end of the boat as it entered the slip. Frank Scotz, the driver, started his engine. The brake was

not set, and, when the boat bumped, the big truck skidded and slipped, went through the chain and the gate, and plunged into the water.

A wrecking derrick raised it later. About three-fourths of the mail was morning newspapers, and the rest first-class and parcel-post matter. None of the mail was missing, as the doors of the truck were locked. The mail matter was brought back to the New York office with the truck.

Equal Three Records.

Several remarkable running performances have been reported from the West. These performances, which are credited to the University of Southern California athletes, were received recently at the headquarters of the Amateur Athletic Union. In a letter to Secretary James E. Sullivan, Walter Christie, the Pacific coast trainer, states that Howard P. Drew and Fred W. Kelley between them tied three world's records on April 7.

At a set of games held at Los Angeles, Cal., to defray the expenses of the University of Southern California team to the University of Pennsylvania relay meet, Drew ran 50 yards in 0.05 2-5, and sixty yards in 0.03 2-5. Kelly ran sixty yards over high hurdles in 0.08 flat. All these times equal the world's amateur records in their respective events.

It is not stated whether these times were made under conditions that would admit of their being accepted by the record committee of the A. A. U. Information regarding weather, track, and competitive conditions has been requested by the record committee.

Waddell's Death Robs Baseball of One Hero.

With the passing of "Rube" Waddell, who died of tuberculosis in San Antonio, Texas, the baseball world lost the greatest left-handed pitcher of all time, and also one of the oddest characters who ever took part in major-league contests.

Waddell was known as much through his eccentricities as for his ball-playing ability, but he was a popular idol despite his bad habits. Only one player, the Kelly of old—the $10,000 beauty—ever rivaled Waddell in popularity, and even Walter Johnson, Cobb, Speaker, and Jackson are not idolized more than was the "Rube" a few years ago.

He played on thirteen clubs during his career. Among his last words was a warning to boys to leave whisky alone. The disease which ended his life was attributed to his fast life.

Thieves Betrayed by Singing Hens.

To the average fancier, the only song of the hen that is considered musical is the cackling which follows the appearance of an egg in a nest, and there would be no melody in it except that it means the jingling of silver coins later on. But Rollin C. Curtis, of Mount Vernon, Ohio, has a flock of Orpingtons which trill and sing as well as the most industrious mocking birds.

Curtis taught his fowls the notes they use in their songs by playing a flute in their nesting place each morning. His neighbors said he was foolish, but he demonstrated that his patience had not been wasted when he recovered his birds after they had been stolen.

Twenty-two of the hens were taken from his henhouse one dark night. Chief of Police Parker was informed of the accomplishments of the hens, and recovered them when he heard their melodious voices in a barn ten blocks from the Curtis home. The thieves were arrested.

Steel Wage Cut Planned.

Five of the larger independent steel companies, it was learned recently, at a conference held in Pittsburgh, decided to reduce wages under certain conditions. The scheduled reductions were not made public. It was announced that foreign competition, which, under the new tariff, enabled manufacturers abroad to compete with manufacturers in the Pittsburgh district for the seaport trade, might not make the reduction necessary, as railroad rates stood, but that, if the requested five-per-cent advance should be granted by the interstate commerce commission, the higher rates and the lower tariff together would make it necessary to cut wages in the mills.

The principal competitor of the United States Steel Corporation, Jones & Laughlin, represented by Willis King; the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company, the Lackawanna Steel Company, the Cambria Steel Company, and Follansbee Brothers, took part in the conference. All these companies, excepting the Lackawanna, which is located in Western New York, have their plants in Western Pennsylvania. Combined, they employ fifty thousand men.

Daniels for Navy Packet.

Secretary of the Navy Daniels has enthusiastically indorsed the plan of Senator Weeks, of Massachusetts, for using lightly armed cruisers and the auxiliary ships of the navy for a commercial and mail line between the United States and South America. Mr. Weeks, in a resolution recently adopted by the Senate, pointed out that under present conditions a privately owned line could not hope to compete with foreign vessels, and suggested that four light cruisers be used for the purpose. Mr. Daniels not only accepted the suggestion, but replied that he could place seventeen ships in the desired trade at a merely nominal cost.

Mr. Daniels named as suitable for this purpose the scout cruisers *Chester* and *Salem;* the fast cruisers *St. Louis, Charleston, Milwaukee, Columbia,* and *Minneapolis;* the Panama Railroad steamers *Ancon* and *Cristobal,* and the *Buffalo, Rainbow, Hector, Mars, Vulcan, Cyclops, Neptune,* and *Nanshan.* The cruisers could carry about twenty cabin passengers each, and 150 tons of express parcels. The *Buffalo, Rainbow, Ancon,* and *Cristobal* could take twenty passengers, and any kind of freight in bulk ranging from 3,000 to 11,000 tons. The *Ancon* and *Cristobal* could carry seventy-four first-class passengers and thirty-two in the steerage, with 11,000 tons of freight. The naval colliers could carry only freight.

Starts Penniless, Dies Billionaire.

Frederick W. Weyerhaeuser is dead in Pasadena, Cal., at the age of seventy-nine years. His wealth is estimated at $1,500,000,000. Death was caused by complications which followed a cold of ten days.

Sixty-two years ago, young Weyerhaeuser, a German peasant, eighteen years old, knowing nothing of any occupation but farming, brought his mother and sisters to America, and began working in a brewery in Erie, Pa., for $9 per month. At the time of his death, he was known

as the "lumber king of the world," was rated as one of the wealthiest men in the United States, and it was a matter of much argument whether his wealth did not exceed the possessions of John D. Rockefeller.

His career is truly a remarkable one. His ambition and business ability built up one of the great fortunes of the world, but there were many who did not know he was the equal, or, perhaps, peer of Rockefeller, Morgan, and Carnegie in wealth, because he shunned publicity in both his private and business affairs.

After working for two years in the Erie brewery, he went West and located at Rock Island, Ill. This was in 1856, and yet he knew nothing of the business which was destined to make his fortune. He obtained work in a sawmill, and there started his great career, for this mill was the first of his purchases. It was here that he met F. C. A. Denckman, a fellow employee, who was associated with him in all his enterprises.

At first he bought in a small way, there being hundreds of acres of timberland in Wisconsin and Minnesota that he purchased for a few cents per acre. The business kept reaching out, until its gigantic operations extended throughout the United States.

Weyerhaeuser married Elizabeth Bloedel, a German girl, whom he had known in his boyhood days in Nieder Saulheim, where he was born. He was the father of four boys and three girls, all living.

He maintained a winter home in Pasadena, and it was while resting there that he became ill. His body was sent to his home in Rock Island, Ill., for interment.

Shinbones Repair Spine and Skull.

News of two remarkable operations at the Postgraduate Hospital, New York, came out recently.

Arthur Lang, a Brooklyn boy, was cured of spinal curvature by the insertion of a ten-inch strip of shinbone. This operation was performed by Professor Fred H. Alvee.

The other operation was upon Ambrose Duffy, a Yorkville boy, who, when a baby, had his skull fractured and had been a constant sufferer. This condition was corrected by the insertion of a piece of shinbone.

In both cases the operations were successful.

Sports a College "Must."

Wesleyan students must attain a certain degree of proficiency in baseball, tennis, or track athletics, the same as in Latin or Greek, according to a ruling of the faculty announced recently. All freshmen are to be required to take regular work in organizing these branches of athletics.

The new rule goes into effect at once, and competent instructors will be provided to watch the work of the men in the different sports. It was adopted in accordance with the athletic policy at Wesleyan, which requires every man to take some part in sports.

Loneliest Job is Pipe-line Walking.

The life of a sheep herder, generally thought to be the loneliest of all, is gay by comparison with the existence of the "pipe-line walker."

Pipe lines carry natural gas to the cities of Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and other States, where it is employed for illuminating and heating purposes, and for supplying certain industries with cheap fuel. These pipe lines radiate in all directions from the gas centers, and it is absolutely necessary that the pressure be maintained.

The greatest menace, therefore, to the proper pressure is leakage in the pipes. To guard against these breaks, there are enlisted the watchful services of several hundred men. These patrolmen must rise at daylight and go their rounds. They walk, and walk, and walk until darkness comes, "looking for trouble."

The lines are divided into sections of twelve or fifteen miles, a man being detailed to watch a section. It is his duty to walk from one end of that section to the other, returning the same day. There is nothing to do but walk and listen, and the pay is about $100 a month. Still, few men care to retain the job for long, since it "gets upon the nerves."

Should a break be found, the walker hastens to the nearest telephone to send in a "hurry call" for the repair man. If no break be found, the walker fills out his report to that effect.

It has been pointed out that, while the sheep herder has his dogs and his sheep to "keep him company," the pipe-line walker has nothing to break the terrible monotony of his job of "walking and listening." It must be remembered that the pipe line follows neither the railway nor the wagon road; it proceeds in a "bee line" straight across country, allowing only for elevations, which it usually skirts. But hills are few and far between in the prairie region. The result is that the pipeline walker is practically alone from the time he rises until he turns in for the night.

After a time the work begins to pall. One sees, walking and sleeping, the same blur of trees and land, land and trees, until he begins to forget the rest of the world and the people and things he has known. It has been said that most patrolmen quit the job before they reach the point when they forget their own names.

Not the least uncanny feature of the pipe-line walker's existence lies in the fact that his ear must be constantly strained for leaks. These leaks betray their presence through a peculiar hissing sound, the detection of which is the sole purpose in life of the pipe patrolmen. "Every time the trees rustle," said one patrolman recently, "you think there is a break ahead. Every drone of the insects starts you to speculating. You start out in the morning with the fear of trouble, and, if a twig cracks under your feet, you get the 'jumps.' If a break would come along once in a while, it would not be so bad."

Owns Duck With Four Legs.

O. D. Brubaker, of Lewistown, Pa., has a duck, one year old, that has four perfect legs. The two on which it waddles are the same as those of any duck. A third leg protrudes from the duck's back and a fourth one is near the tail, both being perfectly formed. Another freak on this farm is a duck egg eleven inches long and weighing nine ounces.

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